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SCRUTINY

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EDITORIAL

WITH this number *Scrutiny* completes its second year. It is an occasion, then, to remind readers of our dependence on their continued support. Indeed, if *Scrutiny* is to become a permanent institution the subscription list must, in this next year, be considerably increased, and towards this end we invite the active co-operation of those readers who feel that we have not fallen too short of our undertaking.[1]

Not that we would be thought to regard the performance up till now with unqualified satisfaction. In particular we know that we have not made such a direct approach to the problems of economics, social order and international relations as their terrible urgency might seem to demand of us. These problems must be the intense concern of every responsible person to-day, and it should not be supposed that we are unconcerned and irresponsible. But, as we have painful reason to know, our energies and opportunities are limited. And in any case *Scrutiny* could not perform the function of a weekly journal. The ideal weekly desiderated in our last number waits to be realized ; but, meanwhile, we do not suppose that *Scrutiny* forms the sole diet of its readers.

And those who read the *New Statesman and Nation* (the absorption by which of the *Week-End Review* means, we hope, that we are to be sure of having at least one focus of intelligent opinion upon national and international affairs) may have noted, in the issue for February 3rd last, this: ' Property has the means to hire propaganda and with it to mobilize the herd mind. Worse still, it has in the press an instrument that weaves the thinking of the masses as a loom weaves cotton cloth. The daily press, with

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[1]We shall be grateful if those who know of possible subscribers will send to the Editors for copies (stating the number required) of a leaflet we have prepared, and if they will distribute these, with such persuasion as they may find appropriate. Readers will also be doing us a service if they can persuade Public Libraries and other institutions to take *Scrutiny*.

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the modern dependence on the advertiser, becomes with each decade a graver menace to democracy.'—Not merely to democracy, it will have been added. At any rate, of those disinterestedly concerned about the future of civilization all but the narrowest fanatics will see in such a passage the justification, in these times, of such activity as is represented by *Scrutiny*. The social and cultural disintegration that has accompanied the development of the vast modern machine is destroying what should have been the control, and leaves a terrifying apparatus of propaganda ready to the hands of the more or less subtle, more or less conscious, more or less direct, emulators of Hitler and his accomplices. What is to forestall or check them? To adapt a phrase used in the December number, without an intelligent, educated and morally responsible public, political programmes can do nothing to arrest the process of disintegration—though they can do something to hasten it.

Scrutiny stands for co-operation in the work of rallying and strengthening such a public, the problem being to preserve (which is not—need we say?—to fix in a dead arrest) a moral, intellectual and, inclusively, humane tradition, such as is essential if society is to learn to control its machinery and direct it to intelligent, just and humane ends. To assume that there can be a substitute, a solution by improvisation, is not to see the problem. The lines on which, in education and elsewhere, we see for ourselves the immediate chance of profitable effort have been defined and illustrated in these pages.

The function we envisage is essentially co-operative—involving co-operation and fostering it. And (as should be obvious enough) this would still be so even if it were merely literary criticism we were concerned with. The critic puts his judgments in the clearest and most unevadable form in order to invite response ; to forward that exchange without which there can be no hope of centrality. Centrality is the product of reciprocal pressures, and a healthy criticism is the play of these. The difficulty of getting anything like an exchange started is one of the most depressing signs of the present situation. We are correspondingly grateful when we meet in the way of comment, response or retort with something different from the usual exhibition of vanity and egotism, and if time and space permitted we should make appropriate acknowledgments (to the *Twentieth Century*, for instance).

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Meanwhile, it is of the utmost importance that a plurality of serious critical organs should persist—and the English reader should not forget those which are published in America. We are glad to hear that we are not going to lose the *Symposium*, and that the suspension for the January quarter is merely for the purposes of reorganization: the next number will appear in April. The *Hound and Horn* carries on, and the unusually interesting January number prints an essay by R. P. Blackmur on Ezra Pound that will repay critical attention. And we have to welcome the first number of *The New Frontier*, edited by Brooks Otis and Reuben Brower. ($2 for six issues, payable to *The New Frontier*, c/o Charles J. Hines, 40 East 66th Street, New York City). The programme is especially interesting to *Scrutiny*: 'Succinctly, we are concerned with the American aspect of two world problems which very roughly we may call the "economic" and the "cultural."'—The American aspect has an interest and an importance outside America. Whether in 'this American world' there exists any other aspect is a question that needs to be kept alive here, and to be answered if possible by something subtler than raw nationalism.

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REVALUATIONS (III)

BURNS

THERE are certain elementary distinctions to be stressed before a just estimate of Burns becomes possible. His Scottish verse must first of all be isolated not only from his own English verse (which is so obviously bad that it may at once be dismissed as such) but from English verse. It has no connections with English verse at any point, so that to consider it as a 'reaction' to the English 18th century manner or, along with Wordsworth, the beginning of the 19th is (and has been) to breed confusions. What it is connected with is the Scottish vernacular verse which for at least two centuries precedes it and of which it is for all practical purposes the culmination. I take *Christis Kirk on the Green* and *Peblis at the Play* as strictly the earliest examples of this tradition. The native elements which have again begun to develop independently in these pieces are present in the verse of Dunbar and Henryson. But the verse of Dunbar and Henryson is not independent in this sense. It has something in common with the rest of medieval verse. It is Scottish and European. *Christis Kirk on the Green, Peblis at the Play,* the vernacular verse of the Sempills, Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns is, on the other hand, Scottish and Independent.

This latter tradition, if narrow, is correspondingly definite. *Christis Kirk, Peblis at the Play,* Fergusson's *Leith Races* and *Hallow Fair,* Burns' *Holy Fair* and *Halloween,* are in sort identical. So also are the verse epistles which start with those of Ramsay and Hamilton of Gilbertfield and end with those of Burns. *Habbie Simson, the Piper of Kilbarchan,* is the first of a series of which the burlesque elegies of Burns are the end. It was probably a positive advantage to Burns that he was compelled to work within these narrowly defined limits. It was a condition probably of his success. But the three years of poetic productivity at Mossgiel, which resulted in the Kilmarnock volume, were, it seems, sufficient practically to exhaust the possibilities. It is difficult to see what else was left him to do, if he was not simply to repeat himself, except turn for the remainder of his life to the songs.

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Watson's *Choice Collections* had made *Christis Kirk, Peblis at the Play,* Montgomerie's *Cherry and the Slae* and other poems generally accessible to the 18th century; and Ramsay had 'modernized' even Dunbar and Henryson for his *Evergreen*. But Burns inherited the past of Scottish vernacular verse essentially, and particularly, through the vernacular verse of Ramsay and Fergusson, his immediate predecessors. He invents nothing himself; he sums up the vernacular verse, and brings it to a climax.

The past, in a wider sense, was still vital in the life and speech with which he was in daily contact, that is, in the life and speech which were also his own. This folk speech cannot be separated from the folk life, of centuries of which it is the product. It is a speech which is itself almost poetry, in that it is close down to the life of sensation and saturated with the concrete wisdom of folk experience connected with the soil. The marvellous vitality which is characteristic of Burns' poetry belongs not merely to Burns but to the language. (See the last verse of *Epistle to Davie*). In a sense the language, at its fullest expression, *is* Burns. To borrow a phrase Mr. Leavis has used of Shakespeare, Burns 'incarnates' the Scottish vernacular. This is his strength. The language throws up phrases of the type

> blethering, blustering, drunken blellum
>
> fleechin,' flethrin'
>
> huff'd an' cuff'd an' disrespeckit
>
> delvers, ditchers and sic cattle
>
> vines an' wines an' drucken Bacchus

which result from no surface manipulation of it. These develop into 'flyting' passages:

> May gravels round his blather wrench
> An' gouts torment him, inch by inch,
> Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch . . . [1]

The use made of the language there must be distinguished from the more deliberate comic collocation of v.v. 20-23 *Death and*

[1] *Scots Drink.*

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Doctor Hornbook. Generally the language bears its own more immediate fruition—phrases 'as fully flavoured as a nut or apple.'[1]

> He draws a bonnie, silken purse
> As lang's my tail, where, thro' the steeks,
> The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks.[2]

The only thing comparable to Burns' poetry is the flowering of Elizabethan folk speech in the Falstaff passages of Shakespeare. That speech belongs to a phase when 'the town' was still essentially part of the country; as the Edinburgh of Fergusson and Ramsay was. It is a speech as far as possible removed from the bloodless speech, and uprooted, bloodless lives, that exist in the tea-shops, dance-halls, cinemas, offices, factories, municipal 'workers' houses,' bungalows, of our sprawling modern Suburbia. Burns' poetry represents what in Scotland, as in England, has been destroyed. Nothing like it is possible now, because the conditions that make a vernacular verse of any sort possible no longer exist.

Burns' failure to write anything better than inferior Pope, Gray, and verse of the Thomson and Beattie and Shenstone sort, when he writes English verse is therefore not without its significance. English was alien to him, no intimate part of his life as was his own speech, so that when he attempts to break the bounds of the narrow vernacular verse tradition by writing English verse (more especially in the years following the Kilmarnock volume), he invariably loses contact with the source of his own power. Writing to Thomson (the Song-Collector), he himself says

> 'These English songs gravel me to death. I have not the command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact I think my ideas are more barren in English than in Scottish.'

This has been the case of other Scotsmen, even Scott. *Proud Maisie* and one or two other poems in the Scottish ballad manner are Scott's contribution to poetry. Fortunately it was still possible for Burns to be a poet of the vernacular, and in general he knew,

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[1]Synge. Preface to the *Playboy*. [2]*The Twa Dogs*.

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with profound intuitive knowledge, what he was doing. (See v.v. 9-12 *Epistle to Lapraik*).

Burns never writes bombast in the vernacular—*bravura* but not bombast. His knowledge of (and by virtue of) the vernacular is too intimate. There is present in the vernacular a shrewdness, a traditional folk sense, which would in any case have kept him right. This profound good sense which is characteristic of Burns as a vernacular poet, and uncharacteristic of him as an English poet, is a different thing from the 18th century English 'good sense.' It has nothing to do with 'decorum.' But its effect is somewhat similar in that Burns is essentially (the fact has been obscured) a great comic, and satiric, poet.

The satires of David Lyndsay (no doubt because directed against the abuses of Rome), had enjoyed a continued popularity among the Scottish folk surpassed only by the Bible. Two centuries of theological controversy had made of the Scottish peasant if not a theologian at least a controversialist, acutely aware of the satiric, as well as the vituperative, possibilities of the vernacular. Burns inherited a Scottish satiric tradition therefore, both through the vernacular itself and through literary practice in the vernacular, as far back, in fact, as medieval church satire. But (it must be observed), there is a more considerable element of satire in Burns' prose than there is in the vernacular verse from which (as verse) it derives. The line from *Christis Kirk* to Fergusson is characteristically comic but not satiric. Any account of Burns' satire must therefore start rather from a consideration of how he utilized the possibilities present in his medium. I shall endeavour to isolate for this purpose two of the 'forces' behind certain of Burns' satiric effects.

The phrase 'gospel kail'[1] exhibits in concentrated form one of these. It is essentially a combination of the same startling kind as

> A bracelet of bright hair about the bone.[2]
> Lilies that fester.[3]
> Christ the tiger.[4]

The associations of 'gospel' are forced into unexpected combination with those of 'kail,' the tension (resulting from their mutual

[1]*The Ordination*. [2]Donne. [3]Shakespeare. [4]Eliot.

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opposition) being extreme. (This is putting Falstaff under the microscope.) But Burns' phrase differs both in itself and in the use (or one of the uses) it is put to in its context. The result of the combination in its case is partially destructive in that ' gospel ' must be equated to ' kail.' The energy thus released is what is absorbed into the satire. Further, the associations of ' kail ' are ' local ' and, as such, contrast with the ' wider ' associations of ' gospel.' The vernacular is as much a matter of idiom as of vocabulary, in that only part of the vocabulary is (as it had become) ' local.' Burns characteristically plays this ' local ' part of his vocabulary against the other part:

> There, at Vienna or Versailles,
> He rives his father's auld entails ;
> Or by Madrid he takes the rout,
> To thrum guitars an' fecht wi'nowt.[1]

The world of Vienna and Versailles, because balanced against the more immediate ' local ' world of

> He rives his father's auld entails

suffers satiric depreciation ; as, more explicitly, in the preceding lines of the same passage:

> Or maybe, in a frolic daft,
> To Hague or Calais taks a waft,
> To make a tour, an' tak a whirl,
> To learn *bon ton,* an' see the worl'.

It is the ' local ' world, on the contrary, which suffers the satiric depreciation in *Holy Willie's Prayer* (the finest of Burns' satires).

> An' when we chasten'd him therefor,
> Thou kens how he bred sic splore
> As set the warld in a roar
> O' laughin' at us ;
> Curse thou his basket and his store,
> Kail and potatoes.

[1] *The Twa Dogs.*

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Burns appreciates its littleness in relation to the God whom Holy Willie (who is of it) familiarly addresses. But he does not appreciate its littleness as a citizen of Europe. On the contrary, this ' local ' world, such as it is, is Burns' own world, and its solidity in comparison with any other is in general at the basis of his satire, and (as I hope to indicate later), of much of his comedy too.

Another of the ' forces ' behind certain of Burns' satiric effects is exaggeration. The satire takes effect at the point at which the exaggeration becomes distortion.

> Or purse-proud, big wi' cent per cent
> An' muckle wame . . . [1]

Broad caricature was inherent in Burns' medium, in that (being possessed of the vigour of folk speech) it admitted of this magnificent coarsening:

> Some gapin', glowerin' country laird
> May warsle for your favour ;
> May claw his lug, and straik his beard,
> And host up some palaver.[2]

Another of the lady's possible suitors is contemptuously dismissed in the equally exaggerated diminutiveness of the line:

> Some mim-mou'd pouther'd priestie.

The exaggerated gestures of the preacher are themselves exaggerated—

> Hear how he clears the points o'faith
> Wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumpin'!
> Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
> He's stampin' an' he's jumpin'![3]

—to the point of it being suggested that the preacher dances a jig in the pulpit—involved in the fun of the Fair. ' But now the Lord's ain trumpet touts.'

Satire is, of course, found in Burns in varying degrees and in association with a variety of qualities. *Holy Willie's Prayer* is parody, in which the eloquence contributes to the satiric effect. The postscript to the *Epistle to William Simpson* is a flight of non-

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[1]Second *Epistle to Lapraik*. [2]*Willie Chalmers*. [3]*Holy Fair*.

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sense, a satiric fantasia. *The Holy Fair* differs from the poems from which it derives in being satiric at all. Its effect is a complicated one—in the particular way its title suggests. It is satiric, in general, in combining the humorous associations of a fair with those of a church, but there is also other satire in it:

> When by the plate we set our nose,
> Weel heapèd up wi' hapence,
> A greedy glow'r Black Bonnet throws,
> An' we maun draw our tippence

and

> But, faith! the birkie wants a manse . . .

Death's account of the patients killed off by the amateurishness of Dr. Hornbook is, perhaps, less satiric than simply witty, as in the surprise at the end of the stave:

> 'A countra laird had ta'en the batts,
> Or some curmurring in his guts;
> His only son for Hornbook sets,
> An' pays him well:
> The lad, for twa guid gimmer-pets,
> Was laird himsel.'

It is, in fact, not always easy to disentangle the satire.

> 'I rhyme for fun.'[1]

Satire in Burns is never very radically dissociated from the Satyric. A quality of its anthropological origins adheres to both his satiric and comic poetry. It is rooted in the rustic festivals, the saturnalia which persisted among the peasantry in spite of Calvinism. Much of it suggests a Dionysiac rout and revel, an intoxication, a dance. The description perhaps applies most simply to *Halloween,* in which the exhilaration is sustained to the end by a swift succession of surprises. But Burns' greatest pieces are all of essentially the same nature—the *Jolly Beggars,* his most representative and, as even the highly serious Arnold thought, his greatest performance, and *Tam o'Shanter,* a later and more studied performance. (*The Cotter's Saturday Night* is of course an obvious fake). These, and

[1] *Epistle to James Smith.*

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perhaps the bulk of his finest comedy, are essentially extravaganza. The comedy tends to farce—of various kinds. The following passage from *Tam o'Shanter* (in which *tour de force* the amazing transitions from passage to passage are rather carefully stage-managed, though only rendered possible at all, of course, by the nature of his idiom) is comic melodrama at the point of farce.

> By this time he was cross the ford,
> Where in the snaw the chapman smoor'd ;
> And past the birks and meikle stane,
> Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane ;
> And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
> Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn ;
> And near the thorn, aboon the well,
> Where Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.

There is an abandon suggested in Burns' verse everywhere which has a strangely invigorating effect. Calvanistic decorum is outraged:

> Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye're wise ;
> Nae ferly tho' ye do despise
> The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys,
> The rattlin' squad:
> I see you upward cast your eyes—
> Ye ken the road[1]

(' nae doubt ye're wise '—' Ye ken the road '—spring from an ironic habit of speech which was not merely personal). Not that Calvinism is not something to be understood and perhaps respected. But what is reasserted in Burns' poetry (in the very rhythm of it, I mean) is a human normality older than Calvanism. To fall back on terms I have already used, a *catharsis* takes place from which an essential sanity (and contentment) results. The rhythm of Burns' poetry is never essentially depressed, not even, I feel, in the vernacular passage at the beginning of *The Vision*, where it comes near it:

> Had I to guid advice but harkit,
> I might, by this, hae led a market,

[1] *Epistle to James Smith.*

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Or strutted in a bank, and clarkit
My cash-account:
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,
Is a' th' amount.

But in general his world is a self-contained (and satisfying) one. I have described it as a ' local ' world. But in one sense it is not comprehended by other worlds. In the phrase:

Eden's bonnie yard[1]

' Eden ' has been annexed by ' bonnie yard.' The meagre fragments which have come down through the vernacular verse from other verse—Phœbus, Pegasus, Parnassus—have likewise become part of it, and do not suggest an externality. The occasional stray personifications have lost contact with the older personification habit (and are not, of course, Gray and Collins). That of Fun,[2] at the beginning of *Holy Fair,* has ceased to be recognizable as a personification:

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I, ' Sweet lass,
I think ye seem to ken me ;
I'm sure I've seen that bonnie face,
But yet I canna name ye.'

The Beast Fable survives, perhaps, into the *Twa Dogs,* the *Poor Mailie* poems, and others, but it has become another thing—part of this familiar ' local ' world:

But ay keep mind to moop an' mell
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel'.

—which is the world of familiar ' local ' conversation.

Death and the Deil belonged, already, to folk conversation. *The Address to the Deil* and the macabre caricature of Death in *Death and Dr. Hornbook* and the drunken home-farer's moonlit conversation with it depend for their comic effect on being ' conversation ' pieces in this ' familiar ' idiom and vocabulary:

' Guid-een,' quo' I ; ' Friend! hae ye been mawin
When ither folk are busy sawin? '

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[1]*Address to the Deil.* [2]It derives from Fergusson's *Mirth.*

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It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan',
But naething spak ;
At length says I, ' Friend, wh'are ye gaun?
Will ye go back? '

This ' familiarity ' is the ' devastating familiarity ' with which (someone has remarked) in the political satire Fox, Pitt, the Prince of Wales,

That vile doup-skelper Emperor Joseph,

and the Scottish Representatives (in the *Earnest Cry and Prayer*) are depreciated.

Burns' verse is, therefore, related on the one hand (I continue to postpone consideration of the Songs) to conversation. It has particularly in the Epistles and Addresses, the informality, and flexibility, of such.

Sae I've begun to scrawl, but whether
In rhyme, or prose, or baith thegither,
Or some hotch-potch that's rightly neither,
Let time mak proof ;
But I shall scribble down some blether
Just clean aff-loof.[1]

The inflexions of the speaking voice are extremely subtly reproduced in the poem *To a Louse* (the masterpiece, I am inclined to think, among his shorter comic pieces). The movement of the poem, and the changes in the movement, correspond with the movements of the creature and suggest these:

Na, faith ye yet! ye'll no be right
Till ye've got on it,

and so to the shift of attention in

O Jenny, dinna toss your head . . .

The various changes in the key (if I may use this analogy here) are another index of the poem's dramatic vitality. The ' flyting '

[1]Second *Epistle to Lapraik*.

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manner of the second verse, for example, modulates into the Brobdingnagian exaggerations of the third. A number of Burns' poems (*Holy Willie's Prayer*, for one, and even, perhaps, a majority of the Songs) are explicit dramatizations.

But to say that Burns' verse is related to conversation is only a half-truth. His verse is verse, a heightened thing, which is the result of several relations. He regarded himself (when writing in the vernacular) as a ' rhymster,' and his ' rhyming,' as such, is indeed so amazing that it demands consideration for itself.

> For me, I'm on Parnassus' brink,
> Rivin' the words to gar them clink ;
> Whyles dazed wi' love, whyles dazed wi' drink.[1]

This is hardly an adequate account. Burns' rhyming springs, rather, from a heightened consciousness of words as such (not so dissimilar from that from which the Elizabethan pun sprang) so that words become associated together (as also in the assonantal phrases I have already cited) through similarity of sound rather than of abstract ' meaning.'

Metrically, and otherwise, Burns' verse (I wish finally to suggest) is affected by Scottish folk-dance. It seems to me to bear something of the same kind of relation to the folk-dance as is borne by much Jacobean verse to Jacobean Stage-Play. This is certainly true of the vernacular Songs. Words, tune, and dance are, in these, essentially one. The tunes to which Burns composed new, or rehandled old, words, were as often as not reels and strathspeys. The dance affects the Songs through these tunes and (as I have suggested in a previous paragraph) the rest of his verse in less tangible ways.

I have postponed consideration of the Songs not merely because they were the labour of the last ten years of his life, but because I think they can best be understood in relation to the Kilmarnock poems, which form the centre of his work. Burns, of course, worked on several different kinds of song, and these must be carefully distinguished. The songs he found in the Song-Books were very miscellaneous, and there are only a few fragments of folk-song even in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*. He writes one or two

[1]Second *Epistle to Davie*.

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' passable '[1] 18th century English popular humorous songs (after the manner of those of the *Beggars' Opera,* a selection of which are in the *Miscellany*). But his ' literary ' English songs are as bad as the rest of his English verse. The ' sensibility ' cult (we are told that he carried about the *Man of Feeling* in his pocket) breaks in upon them, whereas it scarcely affects the vernacular songs. It is essential, therefore, that the vernacular songs should be considered separately, and along with the rest of his vernacular verse. They are the consummation of Scottish folk-song.

Burns' methods of composition of these have elsewhere been admirably gone into.[2] It was an immense labour, part creative, part critical, as many of his letters witness:

> ' *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention, and pains.'

The qualities of these folk-songs are essentially those of the rest of his vernacular poetry—speeded up to the dance, till they become an ecstasy:

Coming through the rye, poor body,
Coming through the rye,
She's draiglet a' her petticoatie,
Coming through the rye.
Jenny's a'wat, poor body ;
Jenny's seldom dry ;
She's draiglet a' her petticoatie,
Coming through the rye . . .

We're a' dry wi' drinkin o't,
We're a' dry wi' drinking o't ;
The minister kiss'd the fiddler's wife,
An' could na preach for thinkin' o't . . .

She has an ee, she has but ane,
The cat has twa the very colour:
Five rusty teeth, forbye a stump,
A clapper tongue wad deave a miller ;

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[1]His own description.

[2]Recently, by Mr. Edwards in his chapter on ' The Traditional Artist as Borrower ' in his *Plagiarism* (Minority Press).

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A whiskin beard about her mou',
Her nose and chin they threaten ither ;
Such a wife as Willie had,
I wadna gie a button for her . . .

The weary pund, the weary pund,
The weary pund a tow ;
I think my wife will end her life
Before she spin her tow.
There sat a bottle in a bole,
Beyond the ingle lowe,
And aye she took the tither souk
To drouk the stowrie tow.

The cardin' o't, the spinnin' o't ;
The warpin' o't, the winnin' o't ;
When ilka ell cost me a groat,
The tailor staw the linin' o't.

Green grow the rashes O,
Green grow the rashes O ;
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent amang the lasses O!
There's nought but care on ev'ry hand',
In ev'ry hour that passes O ;
What signifies the life o' man,
An 'twere na for the lasses O.

I here shift the emphasis from *O, my love is like a red, red rose, Of a' the airts, Bonnie Doon, Go, fetch to me a pint o' wine,* and *Mary Morison* not because I wish finally to deny that these are the summit of achievement, but because I wish to bring them out of relation with 19th century lyric poetry and into relation with the comic background of the rest of Burns' vernacular work. It seems to me that only thus can a right appreciation of them be achieved. The world of Burns' vernacular poetry is a single complete world and, essentially, a world of comedy.

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NOTE.

Some of the early reviews are interesting as documents.

Carlyle's essay I found worse than useless, for my purposes.

Arnold's statement on Burns in the *Study of Poetry* is an authoritative one. But (as will have appeared), I think Mr. Eliot's recent stricture on it in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* on the whole just:

> . . . I suspect Arnold of helping to fix the wholly mistaken notion of Burns as a singular untutored English dialect poet, instead of as the decadent representative of a great alien tradition.'

Henley's essay seemed useful in places.

I am most helped towards an appreciation of Burns' work by Professor Jack's essay in *Poetry and Prose*.

But in what I have written I have attempted the different approach.

JOHN SPEIRS.

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THE SCIENTIFIC BEST SELLER

(1) *The Universe Around Us.* Sir James Jeans. C.U.P. 12/6d.
(2) *The Stars in their Courses.* Sir James Jeans. C.U.P. 5/-.
(3) *The Mysterious Universe.* Sir James Jeans. C.U.P. 2/-.
(4) *The New Background of Science.* Sir James Jeans. C.U.P. 7/6d.
(5) *The Nature of the Physical World.* Sir Arthur Eddington. C.U.P. 5/-.
(6) *Science and the Unseen World.* Sir Arthur Eddington. Allen and Unwin. 1/6d.
(7) *The Expanding Universe.* Sir Arthur Eddington. C.U.P. 3/6d.

The purpose of the present article is to discuss the causes of the popularity of the books listed above, and their value from a general cultural and philosophical point of view.

The interest which the two authors have succeeded in arousing is partly inherent in the subject itself and partly due to the method of presentation. There are two reasons why scientific research may be interesting: (a) the results explain or interpret to some extent the world we live in ; (b) the methods by which these results are obtained are intellectually satisfying for their own sake. A lucid exposition in non-technical terms of any branch of science could therefore be welcomed by anybody who was willing to make the necessary intellectual effort to understand it. There is no doubt that the present interest in physics is to some extent genuine, nor that there are some books of popular scientific exposition which are written with a serious intention of satisfying it. The books which will be discussed here are for the most part in a different category. The authors do not rely primarily on the intrinsic interest of their subject in order to make their books readable, but on the manner of presentation. The characteristic devices by which the interest of the reader is maintained are: (1) emotional appeal ; (2) indiscriminate use of adventitious aids such as unnecessary metaphors

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and similes, in order to make the explanations brighter ; (3) introduction of sensational philosophical theories which have little relevance to the scientific facts.

I.

The discovery of emotional significance in physical, and particularly in astronomical facts, is characteristic of Jeans rather than Eddington. Here is a typical example from *The Mysterious Universe*.

> ' Standing on our microscopic fragment of a grain of sand [the earth], we attempt to discover the nature and purpose of the universe which surrounds our home in space and time. Our first impression is something akin to terror. We find the universe terrifying because of its vast meaningless distances, terrifying because of its inconceivably long vistas of time which dwarf human history to the twinkling of an eye, terrifying because of our extreme loneliness, and because of the material insignificance of our home in space—a millionth part of a grain of sand out of all the sea-sand in the world. But above all else, we find the universe terrifying because it appears to be indifferent to life like our own ; emotion, ambition and achievement, art and religion, all seem equally foreign to its plan. Perhaps indeed we ought to say it appears to be actively hostile to life like our own.' (3, p. 3).[1]
>
> ' Into such a universe we have stumbled, if not exactly by mistake, at least as the result of what may properly be described as an accident.' (3, p. 4).

The range and variety of the emotional appeal should be noted—our terror, loneliness and insignificance, the meaninglessness of distances in the universe, the sentimental associations of ' our home in space and time,' ' our home in space,' the ' indifference ' or even ' hostility ' of the universe to us, the pathos of our accidental stumbling into it.

These emotions are fundamentally false, as are all others in the works of this author. Some can be dismissed at once as such.

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[1]The page references in all cases are to the earlier editions.

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For instance, hostility or indifference can only characterise a person or at all events a mind. It cannot be predicated of nature unless nature is a person, and at this stage of the argument Jeans is not postulating any such thing. It is only introduced to terrify the reader. The significance of the 'meaningless distances' is also very obscure. How can any distance have a 'meaning'? And if some distances do have one, how does the author know that those in the universe do not? He might at least have given some indication of the sort of meaning he would expect to find in a distance. The idea of our stumbling into the universe is equally lacking in point. The way in which mankind appeared on the earth does not resemble a stumble more than any other mode of progression. But the word has a helpless and pathetic sound about it and is therefore impressive. 'Extreme loneliness' can also be dismissed quite shortly in view of the fact that loneliness is a psychological rather than a physical state. It is possible for a person to be lonely in a crowded city or not to be lonely on a desert island in the company of one other person. Jeans often implies that he himself could only escape from his loneliness if the whole universe were packed with living creatures, but it is doubtful whether many other people will find it necessary to agree with him. There remains for discussion only the terror which our insignificance in the universe should inspire in us. It is important to consider this point in detail since the author's more popular works are permeated with the principle—usually implicit but sometimes, as in the above quotation, explicit—that the universe, on account of its size and the rarity of life in it, is a proper object of terror or awe. This principle is, in my opinion, both pernicious and false. The material universe as such is not a proper object of either emotion. Living organisms are not, except in the purely spatial sense, insignificant in it. If for instance we compare a human being with a star we find on the one hand that the star is the bigger, hotter, longer-lived, and generally the brighter of the two. On the other hand the human being is conscious, he has the capacity to appreciate beauty, truth and goodness, he can—at least in appearance—determine his own actions to some extent. As far as we know no star nor spiral nebula, nor the universe as a whole, has any of these properties. Even viewed from the strictly material point of view a human being is structurally much more complex and finely adjusted, and is capable of

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a far greater range of activity, than any star. Hence in estimating the relative importance of a human being and a star we must decide whether consciousness, freedom and capacity to act in innumerable different ways are more or less important than size, brightness, etc. Similar considerations apply in comparing a human being with the whole inorganic universe. It is apparently fundamental in Jeans's attitude that the size of a thing is its most important property, and further that the more things of any particular type there are in the universe, the more important it must be. Stars are bigger than men, there are more stars than people in the universe, therefore from all points of view stars are more important than men, and it is fitting that we should feel reverence and terror when we contemplate them.

The scale of values implicit in this argument is entirely false. There is no reason why we should abase ourselves in terror before anything merely because it is large. Unless the universe can establish a better claim on our respect than that of size, any exaggerated feelings of awe are quite out of place in contemplating it. The fact that this obvious truth could ever be overlooked is a sufficient testimony to the material standards of value which characterise our present civilisation. Jeans's values however are not only false but also, as I have already said, definitely pernicious. He does not merely himself accept the idea of the unimportance of man in comparison with matter, but he uses all his powers of persuasion in order to convince his readers of the fact. Admittedly most people do not need very much persuasion on this point nowadays. We are rapidly becoming so broken-in to the service of machines that we almost find it difficult to conceive of the older standards according to which man was ranked next below God (or at all events the angels) in order of importance. Those of us who still believe that man is infinitely more important than matter are hardly likely to doubt that the attitude to the universe adopted by Jeans and typified in the quotation which has just been discussed is a positively harmful one.[1]

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[1]It is worth mentioning that there is another attitude which is superficially similar but should be clearly distinguished. This is the feeling of awe and admiration which the sky at night arouses in most people and which, in its pure and unintellectualised form,

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The arguments by which Jeans tries to prove that the universe is terrifying are, as a matter of fact, more confused than the preceding account might imply. It is true that his fundamental conception is that of a universe which is terrifying on account of its size, but on many occasions he seeks to intensify the effect by ascribing mind or personality to it. In the passage already quoted it is represented as indifferent or actively hostile to man—epithets which are meaningless when applied to inanimate things and are obviously introduced for their emotive effect. Another variant of the same method is to represent the universe as having been made by a Creator who is completely uninterested in mankind, thereby increasing still further the self-abasement of the reader ; *e.g.* :

' Again the word " accidental " [as applied to the appearance of life in the universe] may be challenged. For what if the creator of the universe selected one special set of laws just because they led to the appearance of life? What if this were his way of creating life? So long as we think of the creator as a magnified man-like being, activated by feelings and interests like our own, the challenge cannot be met . . . If, however, we dismiss every trace of anthropomorphism from our minds, there remains no reason for supposing that the present laws were specially selected in order to produce life. They are just as likely, for instance, to have been selected in order to produce magnetism or radio-activity . . . Viewed from a strictly material standpoint, the utter insignificance of life would seem to go far towards dispelling any idea that it forms a special interest of the Great Architect of the universe.' (3, p. 10).

The argument here is sufficiently curious to deserve a passing examination. It would seem that after we have dismissed ' every trace of anthropomorphism from our minds ' we are still justified in ascribing to the First Cause of the universe the typically human

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is felt as something immediate and requiring no explanation. Its existence does not depend on a knowledge of the distances, sizes, temperatures, etc., of the stars and it can doubtless be felt as directly and intensely by an Arab nomad as by a professoor of astronomy. It is a natural and valuable feeling which I have no intention of criticising. It is a feeling of awe at the beauty of the sky, not as its size and physical properties.

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activities of choosing one of several possibilities, and of feeling interest or lack of interest, but we are not justified in postulating that this (presumably) living creator could be interested in life or in the only other beings in the universe who are capable of choosing things and experiencing emotions. The passage is typical of the sort of reasoning which the modern popular scientist considers to be good enough for the unfortunate reader.

It is unnecessary however to take Jeans's digressions on hostile universes and indifferent creators too seriously, since it is clear from the general trend of his argument that he does not do so himself. His general position may be expressed as follows: there is much more lifeless than living matter in the universe, therefore lifeless matter must be much more important than living matter and we ought to feel terror and self-abasement before it. This, it should be mentioned, does not represent his final conclusion but is put forward as the inevitable consequence of orthodox astronomy and common-sense philosophy. The reader is faced with the proposition: if the universe is composed of inorganic matter the proper emotional response to it is one of terror, awe, loneliness, etc. Having established this (in chapter I of *The Mysterious Universe*), the author proceeds to develop his own philosophy, which is a form of mentalism almost identical with Berkeley's. This solves the supposed difficulties immediately. There is no need to feel terrified of the matter in the universe because there is no matter to be terrified of. Instead there are only thoughts of God which, it would appear, are much more harmless and companionable things, in the presence of which we need feel neither terror nor loneliness. This conclusion does not provide a genuine solution since: (a) it leaves unchallenged the perverted scale of values originally accepted. It rejects or ignores the possibility that living matter may actually be more valuable than lifeless, and merely asserts that there happens to be no lifeless matter. (b) The metaphysical development is unsound; in fact the whole theory is philosophically extremely unplausible. This point is discussed later. It is probable that the uncritical gratitude with which many people accept Jeans's philosophy is due to his capacity to persuade them that mentalistic idealism is the only escape from cosmic terror and despair, and that it is he who, with the help of modern science, has first made this escape possible for an intelligent man.

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Eddington's philosophy is comparatively free from the perversion of values which characterises that of Jeans. He evidently accepts the principle that life and mind are important and valuable in themselves, quite apart from the question whether the universe as a whole is or is not composed of matter, and for this he deserves full credit. He has in consequence avoided much of the false emotional appeal of Jeans. This probably accounts for the opinion which is, I believe, widely held in certain circles, that Jeans is the more profound poet or artist of the two.

II.

The second general objection to the methods of the scientific best seller applies to both authors equally. It is that accuracy of thought and preciseness of expression are everywhere sacrificed to an inherently false and superficial popular appeal. This appeal is produced by a number of speciously attractive tricks. One of the most effective of these, of which one example has already been given, is the dramatisation of the universe (or ' nature ') and the ascription of thoughts, emotions and intentions to ' her.' A further quotation, this time from Eddington, may serve to illustrate this point:

> ' Looking back over the geological record it would seem that Nature made every possible mistake before she reached her greatest achievement Man—or perhaps some would say her worst mistake of all. At one time she put her trust in armaments and gigantic size. Frozen in the rock is the evidence of her failures to provide a form fitted to endure and dominate—failures which we are only too ready to imitate. At last she tried a being of no great size, almost defenceless, defective in at least one of the more important sense-organs ; one gift she bestowed to save him from threatened extinction—a certain stirring, a restlessness, in the organ called the brain.
>
> And so we come to Man.' (6, p. 15).

' It is with some such thoughts as these of the relation of Man to the visible universe ' he complacently adds, ' that the scientifically minded among us approach the problem of his relation to the Unseen World.' Comment is perhaps superfluous, but the author might at least speak for himself. The idea of nature making

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mistakes, putting her trust in this or that and bestowing gifts can only have meaning for a pantheist, and many of ' the scientifically minded among us ' are not pantheists. In point of fact, Eddington himself probably does not really believe in this rather crudely anthropomorphic female which he calls ' Nature ' ; he has introduced her metaphorically, in order to add a little human interest to the story. It is surely obvious, however, that a scientifically minded person should not approach the object of his study through a haze of metaphors. If he does, his philosophical and perhaps also his scientific outlook are liable to become distorted. A striking example of the way in which this anthropomorphism does actually lead to inaccurate thinking is worth quoting:

> ' Nature frowns upon perpetual motion machines and it is *à priori* very unlikely that her universe will provide an example, on the grand scale, of the mechanism she abhors.' (3, p. 144).

The anthropomorphism here is not merely metaphorical but is intrinsic to the argument. In the physical universe there are no *à priori* physical laws. Every law must be based on observation and can only be accepted in so far as it is confirmed by observation. This is a well-known and universally admitted principle among scientists. Hence the assertion that a particular type of law is *à priori* unlikely can have no validity in the physical world as such. It can only apply if nature is really a sort of person, of whose likes and dislikes we have some independent source of knowledge. Evidently by this stage in his argument Jeans has played so often with his human metaphors that he has ceased to realize that they are metaphors at all, and he seriously bases his objections to a scientific theory[1] on the ground that it would be distasteful to ' Nature.' Many other similar instances could be given. And if these metaphors confuse and mislead the authors, much more will they confuse and mislead the average reader.

The whole question of the proper use of metaphor in argument and exposition is one which deserves much more careful con-

[1]The theory in question is that matter may be built up out of radiation as well as disintegrating into radiation, thus producing an endless cycle of activity in the physical world.

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sideration than it commonly receives nowadays. The introduction of a metaphor or simile is never justified for its own sake, or as a casual embellishment in an argument where it is not required. In such cases it simply leads to misunderstanding and lack of precision. It is only justified where a literal statement is inadequate to bring out clearly some relevant aspect of a given problem, or where an argument which the reader finds difficult to understand or accept can be genuinely illuminated by it.[1] The chief uses to which Jeans and Eddington on the other hand put their metaphors and similes are:

(1) To make the reader feel that he understands a theory when he does not. Most or all of the well-known similes by means of which ' curved space ' and ' four-dimensional space-time ' are commonly illustrated belong to this class. They leave the reader with no clearer idea of what these really are than when he started, but they usually leave him with the conviction that he has understood something about them.

(2) To persuade the reader that a given theory is true or false when in fact he is not qualified to pass an intelligent judgment upon it ; *e.g.* ' . . . matter and radiation may not constitute two distinct and non-interchangeable forms of waves. The two may be interchangeable, one passing into the other as the chrysalis passes into the butterfly—to which some scientists would think it necessary to add " and as we can imagine the butterfly to pass back into the chrysalis." ' (3, p. 76). This simile—as far as the first half of it is concerned—is entirely superfluous. The idea of matter changing into radiation is scarcely one which needs pictorial elucidation, and in any case nothing is added to its significance by comparing it with the emergence of a butterfly from a chrysalis. Actually the two processes are remarkably dissimilar. As a matter of fact the simile is evidently introduced in order to convey the impression that the converse change of radiation into matter

[1]It is necessary of course to draw a distinction between ' live ' and ' dead ' metaphors such as has been pointed out by James Smith in this Journal (Dec. 1933). There is no objection to using a ' dead ' metaphor in any stage of an argument provided it no longer conveys associations of its literal meaning.

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is somehow mildly absurd. The unwary reader will probably be left with the impression that the author has produced evidence to show that such a change does not occur, whereas he has done nothing of the sort.

(3) The third and most common use of metaphor and simile in these books is simply to be interesting without regard to relevance. Consider for instance the passage from *Science and the Unseen World,* quoted above (p.). We are justified in assuming, I think, that it is to be understood in a metaphorical sense, and that the author, at least at this stage of his argument, is not asserting that nature has a mind. Essentially he is merely saying that certain large and heavily protected species of animal which used to exist are now extinct, and that man has survived owing to the greater activity of his brain. If this is all that he meant, why did he consider it necessary to bring in the metaphors? If the metaphors were intended to bring out some deeper aspect of evolution which would have been lost in a more straightforward statement, he should have given some indication as to what this aspect was. Actually he does not seem to have meant anything particular by the metaphors ; they were introduced in order to make the book more interesting.

Another typical example from *The Nature of the Physical World* may be quoted. It originally formed part of the author's Gifford Lectures, delivered before what was presumably a highly intelligent audience of theologians, philosophers and scientists:

> ' Suppose now that you order a chunk of space-time with a directed radius of 500 trillion miles in one direction and 800 trillion miles in another. Nature replies " No. We do not stock that. We keep a wide range of choice as regards other details of specification ; but as regards directed radius we have nothing different in different directions, and in fact all our goods have the one standard radius, x trillion miles." I cannot tell you what number to put for x because that is still a secret of the firm.' (5, p. 140).

All that this rigmarole amounts to is: the directed radius of the universe has the same magnitude in all directions, but we do not yet know how large it is. Why was Eddington unable to say so, instead of inventing such a fantastic circumlocution? Presum-

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ably he decided that his audience was not particularly interested in the theories of modern physics and would rather listen to his whimsical stories. Alternatively he may have thought he was addressing a kindergarten. In any case it can hardly be maintained that his version of the fact is either clearer or more profound than the literal statement. It is not surprising that the average reader of the book in question, after having worked his way through 353 pages of this baby-talk, should still be left wondering what modern science is really about.

The author's explanation, given three pages later in the same book, of the fact that the directed radius is constant is also interesting:

> 'The long and short of it is that when the standard metre takes up a new position or direction it measures itself against the directed radius of the world in that region and direction, and takes up an extension which is a definite fraction of the directed radius. I do not see what else it could do. We picture the rod a little bewildered in its new surroundings wondering how large it ought to be—how much of the unfamiliar territory its boundaries ought to take in. It wants to do just what it did before. Recollections of the chunk of space that it formerly filled do not help, because there is nothing of the nature of a landmark. The one thing it can recognize is a directed length belonging to the region where it finds itself; so it makes itself the same fraction of this directed length as it did before.' (5, p. 143).

We are thus offered, as a serious explanation of the fact that the standard metre always remains a constant fraction of the directed radius, the suggestion that the little chap feels it his duty to do so. As far as I can see, the explanation is not even to be understood metaphorically, but literally. When the author says that the standard metre feels that it *ought* to do what it did before, he gives us no reason to suppose that he really means something else, and if so, what? I will not insult him by supposing that he himself took all this seriously. Probably he gave what he knew to be a silly explanation in order to raise a smile in his audience.

The attitude of Jeans and Eddington can perhaps be explained with reference to the following remark: 'Yet Heisenberg now

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makes it appear that nature abhors accuracy and precision above all things.' (3, p. 26). It is a pity, nevertheless, that they should so evidently consider it their duty to imitate 'nature' in this respect.

As in the previous section, I should make it clear that I am not merely asserting the negative objection that the sort of writing exemplified in the foregoing quotations is worthless, but also the positive one that it is harmful. It tends to encourage mental laziness, loose thinking and intellectual confusion even in people who read it with the serious intention of learning something about modern science. The characteristic feature of all these books is that they are remarkably easy to read superficially and uncritically, and that when read in this way they leave the reader in a rather exciting and mysterious state of complete mental confusion. If he tries to exercise his critical faculty and to understand what the author really means, he is brought up against innumerable inaccuracies and inconsistencies similar to those which have already been discussed. Since the impression is conveyed that these are being uttered with the full authority of modern science, he is unwilling to believe that they are as silly as they appear. He is therefore liable to give up the struggle and to content himself with enjoying the jokes, chuckling at the whimsical fancies, or feeling little thrills of 'terror' during the more exalted passages. Probably he will soon allow himself to be persuaded that because he can appreciate the humorous stories he is really understanding what he reads. The result is that he finishes up in an intellectually dishonest position, and that his capacity for precise thinking and independent criticism will be correspondingly impaired.

III.

The philosophical conclusions reached by the two authors are generally considered by philosophers to be either unintelligible or valueless. They have been clearly and convincingly criticised in two recently published books[1] and need not be discussed in detail

[1] *Where is Science Going?* Max Planck. George Allen and Unwin, 7/6d.
Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science. C. E. M. Joad. George Allen and Unwin, 10/6d.

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here. The passages which I have already quoted should be sufficient to throw considerable suspicion on any conclusions reached by the type of argument exemplified therein. However, since so much has been written lately on the philosophical consequences of modern science, it may be worth while to consider these briefly. From the point of view of the philosopher the most interesting facts which have emerged from the recent advances in physics are:

(1) The methods of physics can tell us nothing about the intrinsic nature of matter, but only about its structure and behaviour.

(2) Measurements of the behaviour of matter cannot be refined beyond a certain definite degree of accuracy, owing to inherent limitations in the structure of the instruments at our disposal. There is no prospect of these limitations ever being overcome. The old mechanistic view that the future course of the world could be completely predicted given complete knowledge of its state at any one instant is thus deprived of significance by the fact that this knowledge is inherently unobtainable.

(3) The microscopic behaviour of physical objects can be expressed more satisfactorily by formulæ expressing the probabilities that certain events will happen, than by formulæ which purport to give exact information. This follows to some extent from (2).

(4) The movement of physical objects can be expressed more satisfactorily in terms of a generalized geometry of tensor equations than in terms of Euclidean geometry. The popular scientist expresses this fact picturesquely but inaccurately by the statement that ' space is curved.'

(5) In general, physical laws require for their expression a much more advanced type of mathematics, and are therefore much more difficult for the layman to comprehend, than has previously been supposed.

None of these conclusions is at all revolutionary from the philosophical point of view. (1) has long been a commonplace among philosophers, and was in fact generally accepted by intelligent scientists on the Continent before the end of last century,

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although it took much longer to become established in England. The results of modern physics have now compelled many even of the most dogmatic physicists to accept it, but have not thrown any new light upon it. (2) is of some interest as showing that it will never be possible to prove experimentally that all events are rigidly determined by physical law. Even according to the older physics, however, the chance of such an experimental test ever becoming possible was so small that the philosopher did not need to take it very seriously. (3) has been taken by the popular scientist as positive evidence that there is a real element of indeterminism in the world, but there is no justification for this. The existence of probability laws is consistent either with complete ultimate determinism or with partial indeterminism. (4) has a certain importance since some philosophers have believed that there were *à priori* reasons why the movements of bodies should be more properly expressed in terms of Euclidean geometry than of any other. This belief has now been shown to be highly unplausible. (5) has been used by Jeans as evidence that the Creator is a Pure Mathematician. If by this he simply means that the Creator must have been well acquainted with tensor equations, wave mechanics, matrices, etc., in order to create the world as he did the suggestion may pass without comment. If he means anything more, he is going beyond the available evidence.

Starting from these not very promising data, and a few other less important ones, Jeans and Eddington claim to deduce various sensational philosophical conclusions. The former for instance concludes that all matter consists of thoughts in the mind of God, and the latter that all matter is mind-stuff. The arguments used are difficult to follow, and the general obscurity is not diminished by the fact that both authors, in their more lucid moments, recognize clearly that science can give no information on the intrinsic nature of matter, *e.g.*:

> 'For this reason, to borrow Locke's phrase, "the real essence of substances" is for ever unknowable.' (3, p. 131).

> 'And if to-day you ask a physicist what he has finally made out the æther or the electron to be . . . he will point to a number of symbols and a set of mathematical equations which they satisfy. What do the symbols stand for? The mysterious

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reply is given that physics is indifferent to that ; *it has no means of probing beneath the symbolism.*' (6, p. 20). (Italics mine).

In spite of these unambiguous statements, neither author appears to be aware of any inconsistency in their conclusion that modern science indicates that all matter is mental. In point of fact, all that modern science has done is to release the scientist from his supposed obligation to be a dogmatic materialist and determinist. Jeans and Eddington were evidently brought up in the strictest school of Victorian orthodoxy and consequently used to believe as an article of faith that metaphysics was all nonsense, since it discussed matters, such as the intrinsic nature of things, which lay solely in the province of the scientist, and were furthermore so obvious as to need no discussion. A few years ago they were compelled to abandon this view and to recognize that the problems of metaphysics were real ones. They have therefore taken the opportunity to do a little amateur philosophising on their own account. Unfortunately they still appear to labour under the very common delusion that philosophical problems are perfectly simple, and that anybody can tackle them with the aid of a little common-sense. This is not the case. Accurate thinking is more difficult, and requires a severer mental discipline, in metaphysics than in any other branch of intellectual activity.

The arguments which the two authors adduce in support of their mentalism appear to be very similar to those put forward by Berkeley in the 18th century. (This is particularly the case with Eddington). These arguments, although most of them cannot be definitely disproved, have been shewn to be so unplausible that they are now almost universally rejected by philosophers. In spite of this, no attempt has been made by either author to meet any of the philosophical objections, and they are apparently unaware that such objections exist. Hence, in view of the fact that neither is a trained philosopher, and that both admit that the problem is not one which can be elucidated by science, their speculations on the subject are not likely to have much value. It is exactly as though a philosopher, after having admitted that philosophy can give no information on astronomical problems, and possessing no technical knowledge of astronomy, should proceed to put forward some highly controversial astronomical

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theories as if they were the latest conclusions of modern astronomy.

Similar remarks apply to the discussions on determinism. Here, again, the results of modern physics only prove that the question whether all events are determined or not is one which science cannot answer. In particular, the problem of freewill, which is an entirely different thing from mere indeterminism, remains unaffected in spite of all attempts on the part of popular scientists to show that it is somehow relevant.

The quotations in this review have purposely been selected from only three of the books listed above (nos. 3, 5 and 6), in order to make it clear that the criticisms have been directed mainly against these three. With the remaining four they require some qualification. *The Universe Around Us* and *The Stars in their Courses* are comparatively straight-forward accounts of our present astronomical knowledge of the universe. They are almost free from bad metaphysics and emotionalism, and are not seriously disfigured by cheap sensationalism. They are probably the best popular books available on the subject and for this reason can be recommended with some reserve to those interested in astronomy. *The New Background of Science* deals with the supposed philosophical consequences of modern science. It has the merit of avoiding the superficial appeal of the best-seller and of approaching the subject in a serious spirit. As has been pointed out, however, the qualifications of the author are not sufficient to give the book any real value. *The Expanding Universe* avoids philosophical topics to a large extent, and the manner of presentation is rather less silly than in Eddington's other popular works. The emphasis which I have laid on *The Mysterious Universe, Science and the Unseen World* and *The Nature of the Physical World* is, I think, amply justified by the fact that these three books have undoubtedly played much the largest part in establishing the popular reputations of their authors and in determining the reaction of the layman to modern physics.

In conclusion I should point out that the present criticisms are confined to the popular writings of the two authors and have no application at all to their purely scientific work. In view of the high international reputation which both enjoy as scientists, it is safe to assume that the latter is entirely free from the faults which I have been discussing. In any case I should be quite unqualified to criticise it.

J. L. RUSSELL.

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THE IRONY OF SWIFT

SWIFT is a great English writer. For opening with this truism I have a reason: I wish to discuss Swift's writings—to examine what they are; and they are (as the extant commentary bears witness) of such a kind that it is peculiarly difficult to discuss them without shifting the focus of discussion to the kind of man that Swift was. What is most interesting in them does not so clearly belong to the realm of things made and detached that literary criticism, which has certainly not the less its duties towards Swift, can easily avoid turning—unawares, and that is, degenerating—into something else. In the attempt to say what makes these writings so remarkable, reference to the man who wrote is indeed necessary; but there are distinctions. For instance, one may (it appears), having offered to discuss the nature and import of Swift's satire, find oneself countering imputations of misanthropy with the argument that Swift earned the love of Pope, Arbuthnot, Gay, several other men and two women: this should not be found necessary by the literary critic. But the irrelevancies of Thackeray and of his castigator, the late Charles Whibley—irrelevancies not merely from the point of view of literary criticism—are too gross to need placarding; more insidious deviations are possible.

The reason for the opening truism is also the reason for the choice of title. To direct the attention upon Swift's irony gives, I think, the best chance of dealing adequately, without deviation or confusion, with what is essential in his work. But it involves also (to anticipate an objection) a slight to the classical status of *Gulliver's Travels*, a book which, though it may represent Swift's most impressive achievement in the way of complete creation—the thing achieved and detached—does not give the best opportunities for examining his irony. And *Gulliver's Travels*, one readily agrees, hasn't its classical status for nothing. But neither is it for nothing that, suitably abbreviated, it has become a classic for children. What for the adult reader constitutes its peculiar force—what puts it in so different a class from

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Robinson Crusoe—resides for the most part in the fourth book (to a less extent in the third). The adult may re-read the first two parts, as he may *Robinson Crusoe,* with great interest, but his interest, apart from being more critically conscious, will not be of a different order from the child's. He will, of course, be aware of an ingenuity of political satire in *Lilliput,* but the political satire is, unless for historians, not very much alive to-day. And even the more general satire characteristic of the second book will not strike him as very subtle. His main satisfaction, a great deal enhanced, no doubt, by the ironic seasoning, will be that which Swift, the student of the *Mariner's Magazine* and of travellers' relations, aimed to supply in the bare precision and the matter-of-fact realness of his narrative.

But what in Swift is most important, the disturbing characteristic of his genius, is a peculiar emotional intensity ; that which, in *Gulliver,* confronts us in the Struldbrugs and the Yahoos. It is what we find ourselves contemplating when elsewhere we examine his irony. To lay the stress upon an emotional intensity should be matter of commonplace: actually, in routine usage, the accepted word for Swift is ' intellectual.' We are told, for instance, that his is pre-eminently ' intellectual satire ' (though we are not told what satire is). For this formula the best reason some commentators can allege is the elaboration of analogies—their ' exact and elaborate propriety '[1]—in *Gulliver.* But a muddled perception can hardly be expected to give a clear account of itself ; the stress on Swift's ' intellect ' (Mr. Herbert Read alludes to his ' mighty intelligence ')[2] registers, it would appear, a confused sense, not only of the mental exercise involved in his irony, but of the habitually critical attitude he maintains towards the world, and of the negative emotions he specializes in.

From ' critical ' to ' negative ' in this last sentence is, it will be observed, a shift of stress. There are writings of Swift where ' critical ' is the more obvious word (and where ' intellectual ' may seem correspondingly apt)—notably, the pamphlets or pamphleteering essays in which the irony is instrumental, directed and limited to a given end. The *Argument Against Abolishing Christi-*

[1]Churton Collins.
[2]*English Prose Style.*

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anity and the *Modest Proposal,* for instance, are discussible in the terms in which satire is commonly discussed: as the criticism of vice, folly, or other aberration, by some kind of reference to positive standards. But even here, even in the *Argument,* where Swift's ironic intensity undeniably directs itself to the defence of something that he is intensely concerned to defend, the effect is essentially negative. The positive itself appears only negatively—a kind of skeletal presence, rigid enough, but without life or body ; a necessary pre-condition, as it were, of directed negation. The intensity is purely destructive.

The point may be enforced by the obvious contrast with Gibbon—except that between Swift's irony and Gibbon's the contrast is so complete that any one point is difficult to isolate. Gibbon's irony, in the fifteenth chapter, may be aimed against, instead of for, Christianity, but contrasted with Swift's it is an assertion of faith. The decorously insistent pattern of Gibbonian prose insinuates a solidarity with the reader (the implied solidarity in Swift is itself ironical—a means to betrayal), establishes an understanding and habituates to certain assumptions. The reader, it is implied, is an 18th century gentleman (' rational,' ' candid,' ' polite,' elegant,' ' humane ') ; eighteen hundred years ago he would have been a pagan gentleman, living by these same standards (those of absolute civilization) ; by these standards (present everywhere in the stylized prose and adroitly emphasized at key-points in such phrases as ' the polite Augustus,' ' the elegant mythology of the Greeks ') the Jews and early Christians are seen to have been ignorant fanatics, uncouth and probably dirty. Gibbon as a historian of Christianity had, we know, limitations ; but the positive standards by reference to which his irony works represent something impressively realized in 18th century civilization ; impressively ' there ' too in the grandiose, assured and ordered elegance of his history. (When, on the other hand, Lytton Strachey, with a Gibbonian period or phrase or word, a ' remarkable,' ' oddly,' or ' curious,' assures us that he feels an amused superiority to these Victorian puppets, he succeeds only in conveying his personal conviction that he feels amused and superior.)

Gibbon's irony, then, habituates and reassures, ministering to a kind of judicial certitude or complacency. Swift's is essentially a

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matter of surprise and negation ; its function is to defeat habit, to intimidate and to demoralize. What he assumes in the *Argument* is not so much a common acceptance of Christianity as that the reader will be ashamed to have to recognize how fundamentally un-Christian his actual assumptions, motives and attitudes are. And in general the implication is that it would shame people if they were made to recognize themselves unequivocally. If one had to justify this irony according to the conventional notion of satire, then its satiric efficacy would be to make comfortable non-recognition, the unconsciousness of habit, impossible.

A method of surprise does not admit of description in an easy formula. Surprise is a perpetually varied accompaniment of the grave, dispassionate, matter-of-fact tone in which Swift delivers his intensities. The dissociation of emotional intensity from its usual accompaniments inhibits the automatic defence-reaction:

> ' He is a Presbyterian in politics, and an atheist in religion ; but he chooses at present to whore with a Papist.'

> ' What bailiff would venture to arrest Mr. Steele, now he has the honour to be your representative? and what bailiff ever scrupled it before? '

—Or inhibits, let us say, the normal response ; since ' defence ' suggests that it is the ' victim ' whose surprise we should be contemplating, whereas it is our own, whether Swift's butt is Wharton or the atheist or mankind in general. ' But satire, being levelled at all, is never resented for an offence by any, since every individual person makes bold to understand it of others, and very wisely removes his particular part of the burden upon the shoulders of the World, which are broad enough and able to bear it.'[1] There is, of course, no contradiction here ; a complete statement would be complex. But, actually, the discussion of satire in terms of offence and castigation, victim and castigator, is unprofitable, though the idea of these has to be taken into account. What we are concerned with (the reminder is especially opportune) is an arrangement of words on the page and their effects—the emotions, attitudes and ideas that they organize.

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[1] *The Tale of a Tub : The Preface.*

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Our reaction, as Swift says, is not that of the butt or victim ; nevertheless, it necessarily entails some measure of sympathetic self-projection. We more often, probably, feel the effect of the words as an intensity in the castigator than as an effect upon a victim: the dissociation of animus from the usual signs defines for our contemplation a peculiarly intense contempt or disgust. When, as sometimes we have to do, we talk in terms of effect on the victim, then ' surprise ' becomes an obviously apt word ; he is to be betrayed, again and again, into an incipient acquiescence:

> ' *Sixthly,* This would be a great Inducement to Marriage, which all wise Nations have either encouraged by Rewards, or enforced by Laws and Penalties. It would increase the Care and Tenderness of Mothers towards their Children, when they were sure of a Settlement for Life, to the poor Babes, provided in some Sort by the Publick, to their annual Profit instead of Expence ; we should soon see an honest Emulation among the married Women, *which of them could bring the fattest Child to the Market.* Men would become as *fond* of their Wives, during the Time of their Pregnancy, as they are now of their *Mares* in Foal, their *Cows* in Calf, or *Sows* when they are ready to farrow, nor offer to beat or kick them (as is too *frequent* a Practice) for fear of a Miscarriage.'

The implication is: ' This, as you so obligingly demonstrate, is the only kind of argument that appeals to you ; here are your actual faith and morals. How, on consideration, do you like the smell of them? '

But when in reading the *Modest Proposal* we are most engaged it is an effect directly upon ourselves that we are most disturbingly aware of. The dispassionate, matter-of-fact tone induces a feeling and a motion of assent, while the burden, at the same time, compels the feelings appropriate to rejection, and in the contrast—the tension—a remarkably disturbing energy is generated. A sense of an extraordinary energy is the general effect of Swift's irony. The intensive means just indicated are reinforced extensively in the continuous and unpredictable movement of the attack, which turns this way and that, comes now from one quarter and now from another, inexhaustibly surprising—making again an odd

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contrast with the sustained and level gravity of the tone. If Swift does for a moment appear to settle down to a formula it is only in order to betray ; to induce a trust in the solid ground before opening the pitfall.

' His *Tale of a Tub* has little resemblance to his other pieces. It exhibits a vehemence and rapidity of mind, a copiousness of images, a vivacity of diction, such as he afterwards never possessed, or never exerted. It is of a mode so distinct and peculiar, that it must be considered by itself ; what is true of that, is not true of anything else he has written.'—What Johnson is really testifying to here is the degree in which the *Tale of a Tub* is characteristic and presents the qualities of Swift's genius in concentrated form. ' That he has in his works no metaphors, as has been said, is not true,' says Johnson a sentence or two later ,' but his few metaphors seem to be received rather by necessity than choice.' This last judgment may at any rate serve to enforce Johnson's earlier observation that in the *Tale of a Tub* Swift's powers function with unusual freedom. For the ' copiousness of images ' that Johnson constates is, as the phrase indicates, not a matter of choice but of essential genius. And, as a matter fact, in this ' copiousness of images ' the characteristics that we noted in discussing Swift's pamphleteering irony have their supreme expression.

It is as if the gift applied in *Gulliver* to a very limiting task—directed and confined by a scheme uniting a certain consistency in analogical elaboration with verisimilitude—were here enjoying free play. For the bent expressing itself in this ' copiousness ' is clearly fundamental. It shows itself in the spontaneous metaphorical energy of Swift's prose—in the image, action or blow that. leaping out of the prosaic manner, continually surprises and dis concerts the reader: ' such a man, truly wise, creams off Nature, leaving the sour and the dregs for philosophy and reason to lap up.' It appears with as convincing a spontaneity in the sardonic vivacity of comic vision that characterizes the narrative, the presentment of action and actor. If, then, the continual elaborate play of analogy is a matter of cultivated habit, it is a matter also of cultivated natural bent, a congenial development. It is a development that would seem to bear a relation to the Metaphysical fashion in verse (Swift was born in 1667). The spirit of it is that

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of a fierce and insolent game, but a game to which Swift devotes himself with a creative intensity.

> ' And whereas the mind of man, when he gives the spur and bridle to his thoughts, does never stop, but naturally sallies out into both extremes of high and low, of good and evil, his first flight of fancy commonly transports him to ideas of what is most perfect, finished, and exalted, till, having soared out of his own reach and sight, not well perceiving how near the frontiers of height and depth border upon each other, with the same course and wing he falls down plump into the lowest bottom of things, like one who travels the east into the west, or like a straight line drawn by its own length into a circle. Whether a tincture of malice in our natures makes us fond of furnishing every bright idea with its reverse, or whether reason, reflecting upon the sum of things, can, like the sun, serve only to enlighten one half of the globe, leaving the other half by necessity under the shade and darkness, or whether fancy, flying up to the imagination of what is highest and best, becomes over-short, and spent, and weary, and suddenly falls, like a dead bird of paradise, to the ground . . . '

—One may (without difficulty) resist the temptation to make the point by saying that this is poetry ; one is still tempted to say that the use to which so exuberant an energy is put is a poet's. ' Exuberant ' seems, no doubt, a paradoxical word to apply to an energy used as Swift uses his ; but the case is essentially one for paradoxical descriptions.

In his use of negative materials—negative emotions and attitudes—there is something that it is difficult not to call creative, though the aim always is destructive. Not all the materials, of course, are negative: the ' bird of paradise ' in the passage above is alive as well as dead. Effects of this kind, often much more intense, are characteristic of the *Tale of a Tub,* where surprise and contrast operate in modes that there is some point in calling poetic. ' The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together '—and in the juxtaposition intensity is generated.

' Paracelsus brought a squadron of stink-pot-flingers from the snowy mountains of Rhætia '—this (which comes actually from the *Battle of the Books*) does not represent what I have in mind ;

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it is at once too simple and too little charged with animus. Swift's intensities are intensities of rejection and negation ; his poetic juxtapositions are, characteristically, destructive in intention, and when they most seem creative of energy are most successful in spoiling, reducing, and destroying. Sustained ' copiousness,' continually varying, and concentrating surprise in sudden local foci, cannot be represented in short extracts ; it must suffice here to say that this kind of thing may be found at a glance on almost any page :

> ' Meantime it is my earnest request that so useful an undertaking may be entered upon (if their Majesties please) with all convenient speed, because I have a strong inclination before I leave the world to taste a blessing which we mysterious writers can seldom reach till we have got into our graves, whether it is that fame, being a fruit grafted on the body, can hardly grow and much less ripen till the stock is in the earth, or whether she be a bird of prey, and is lured among the rest to pursue after the scent of a carcass, or whether she conceives her trumpet sounds best and farthest when she stands on a tomb, by the advantage of a rising ground and the echo of a hollow vault.'

It is, of course, possible to adduce Swift's authority for finding that his negations carry with them a complementary positive—an implicit assertion. But (*pace* Charles Whibley) the only thing in the nature of a positive that most readers will find convincingly present is self-assertion—*superbia*. Swift's way of demonstrating his superiority is to destroy, but he takes a positive delight in his power. And that the reader's sense of the negativeness of the *Tale of a Tub* is really qualified comes out when we refer to the Yahoos and the Struldbrugs for a test. The ironic detachment is of such a kind as to reassure us that this savage exhibition is mainly a game, played because it is the insolent pleasure of the author : ' demonstration of superiority ' is as good a formula as any for its prevailing spirit. Nevertheless, about a superiority that asserts itself in this way there is something disturbingly odd, and again and again in the *Tale of a Tub* we come on intensities that shift the stress decisively and remind us how different from Voltaire Swift is, even in his most complacent detachment.

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I propose to examine in illustration a passage from the *Digression Concerning the Original, the Use, and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth* (*i.e.* Section IX). It will have, in the nature of the case, to be a long one, but since it exemplifies at the same time all Swift's essential characteristics, its length will perhaps be tolerated. I shall break up the passage for convenience of comment, but, except for the omission of nine or ten lines in the second instalment, quotation will be continuous:

> 'For the brain in its natural position and state of serenity disposeth its owner to pass his life in the common forms, without any thought of subduing multitudes to his own power, his reasons, or his visions, and the more he shapes his understanding by the pattern of human learning, the less he is inclined to form parties after his particular notions, because that instructs him in his private infirmities, as well as in the stubborn ignorance of the people. But when a man's fancy gets astride on his reason, when imagination is at cuffs with the senses, and common understanding as well as common sense is kicked out of doors, the first proselyte he makes is himself; and when that is once compassed, the difficulty is not so great in bringing over others, a strong delusion always operating from without as vigorously as from within. For cant and vision are to the ear and the eye the same that tickling is to the touch. Those entertainments and pleasures we most value in life are such as dupe and play the wag with the senses. For if we take an examination of what is generally understood by happiness, as it has respect either to the understanding or to the senses, we shall find all its properties and adjuncts will herd under this short definition, that it is a perpetual possession of being well deceived.'

Swift's ant-like energy—the business-like air, obsessed intentness and unpredictable movement—have already had an effect. We are not, at the end of this instalment, as sure that we know just what his irony is doing as we were at the opening. Satiric criticism of sectarian 'enthusiasm' by reference to the 'common forms'—the Augustan standards—is something that, in Swift, we can take as very seriously meant. But in the incessant patter of the argument we have (helped by such things as, at the end, the suggestion of animus in that oddly concrete 'herd') a sense that

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direction and tone are changing. Nevertheless, the change of tone for which the next passage is most remarkable comes as a disconcerting surprise:

> 'And first, with relation to the mind or understanding, it is manifest what mighty advantages fiction has over truth, and the reason is just at our elbow: because imagination can build nobler scenes and produce more wonderful revolutions than fortune or Nature will be at the expense to furnish . . . Again, if we take this definition of happiness and examine it with reference to the senses, it will be acknowledged wonderfully adapt. How sad and insipid do all objects accost us that are not conveyed in the vehicle of delusion! How shrunk is everything as it appears in the glass of Nature, so that if it were not for the assistance of artificial mediums, false lights, refracted angles, varnish, and tinsel, there would be a mighty level in the felicity and enjoyments of mortal men. If this were seriously considered by the world, as I have a certain reason to suspect it hardly will, men would no longer reckon among their high points of wisdom the art of exposing weak sides and publishing infirmities—an employment, in my opinion, neither better nor worse than that of unmasking, which, I think, has never been allowed fair usage, either in the world or the playhouse.'

The suggestion of changing direction does not, in the first part of this passage, bring with it anything unsettling: from ridicule of 'enthusiasm' to ridicule of human capacity for self-deception is an easy transition. The reader, as a matter of fact, begins to settle down to the habit, the steady drift of this irony, and is completely unprepared for the sudden change of tone and reversal of attitude in the two sentences beginning: 'How sad and insipid do all objects,' etc. Exactly what the change means or is, it is difficult to be certain (and that is of the essence of the effect). But the tone has certainly a personal intensity and the ironic detachment seems suddenly to disappear. It is as if one found Swift in the place—at the point of view—where one expected to find his butt. But the ambiguously mocking sentence with which the paragraph ends reinforces the uncertainty.

The next paragraph keeps the reader for some time in uneasy doubt. The irony has clearly shifted its plane, but in which

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direction is the attack going to develop? Which, to be safe, must one dissociate oneself from, ' credulity ' or ' curiosity '?

> ' In the proportion that credulity is a more peaceful possession of the mind than curiosity, so far preferable is that wisdom which converses about the surface to that pretended philosophy which enters into the depths of things and then comes gravely back with informations and discoveries, that in the inside they are good for nothing. The two senses to which all objects first address themselves are the sight and the touch ; these never examine further than the colour, the shape, the size, and whatever other qualities dwell or are drawn by art upon the outward of bodies ; and then comes reason officiously, with tools for cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing, offering to demonstrate that they are not of the same consistence quite through. Now I take all this to be the last degree of perverting Nature, one of whose eternal laws is to put her best furniture forward. And therefore, in order to save the charges of all such expensive anatomy for the time to come, I do here think fit to inform the reader that in such conclusions as these reason is certainly in the right ; and that in most corporeal beings which have fallen under my cognisance the outside hath been infinitely preferable to the in, whereof I have been further convinced from some late experiments. Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse.'

The peculiar intensity of that last sentence is, in its own way, so decisive that it has for the reader the effect of resolving uncertainty in general. The disturbing force of the sentence is a notable instance of a kind already touched on: repulsion is intensified by the momentary co-presence, induced by the tone, of incipient and incompatible feelings (or motions) of acceptance. And that Swift feels the strongest animus against ' curiosity ' is now beyond all doubt. The natural corollary would seem to be that ' credulity,' standing ironically for the ' common forms '—the sane, socially-sustained, common-sense illusions—is the positive that the reader must associate himself with and rest on for safety. The next half-page steadily and (to all appearances) unequivocally confirms this assumption:

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> ' Yesterday I ordered the carcass of a beau to be stripped in my presence, when we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected faults under one suit of clothes. Then I laid open his brain, his heart, and his spleen, but I plainly perceived at every operation that the farther we proceeded, we found the defects increase upon us in number and bulk ; from all of which I justly formed this conclusion to myself, that whatever philosopher or projector can find out an art to sodder and patch up the flaws and imperfections of Nature, will deserve much better of mankind and teach us a much more useful science than that, so much in present esteem, of widening and exposing them (like him who held anatomy to be the ultimate end of physic). And he whose fortunes and dispositions have placed him in a convenient station to enjoy the fruits of this noble art, he that can with Epicurus content his ideas with the films and images that fly off upon his senses from the superficies of things, such a man, truly wise, creams off Nature, leaving the sour and the dregs for philosophy and reason to lap up.'

Assumption has become habit, and has been so nourished that few readers note anything equivocal to trouble them in that last sentence: the concrete force of ' creams off,' ' sour,' ' dregs ' and ' lap up ' seems unmistakably to identify Swift with an intense animus against ' philosophy and reason ' (understood implicitly to stand for ' curiosity ' the anatomist). The reader's place, of course, is with Swift.

The trap is sprung in the last sentence of the paragraph:

> ' This is the sublime and refined point of felicity called the possession of being well-deceived, the serene peaceful state of being a fool among knaves.'

What is left? The next paragraph begins significantly: ' But to return to madness.' This irony may be critical, but ' critical ' turns out, in no very long run, to be indistinguishable from ' negative.' The positives disappear. Even when, as in the Houyhnhnms, they seem to be more substantially present, they disappear under our ' curiosity.' The Houyhnhnms, of course, stand for Reason, Truth and Nature, the Augustan positives, and it was in deadly earnest that Swift appealed to these ; but how

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little at best they were anything solidly realised comparison with Pope brings out. Swift did his best for the Houyhnhnms, and they may have all the reason, but the Yahoos have all the life. Gulliver's master 'thought Nature and reason were sufficient guides for a reasonable animal,' but Nature and reason as Gulliver exhibits them are curiously negative, and the reasonable animals appear to have nothing in them to guide. 'They have no fondness for their colts or foals, but the care they take in educating them proceeds entirely from the dictates of reason.' This freedom from irrational feelings and impulses simplifies other matters too: 'their language doth not abound in variety of words, because their wants and passions are fewer than among us.' And so conversation, in this model society, is simplified: 'nothing passed but what was useful, expressed in the fewest and most significant words . . .' 'Courtship, love, presents, jointures, settlements, have no place in their thoughts, or terms whereby to express them in their language. The young couple meet and are joined, merely because it is the determination of their parents and friends: it is what they see done every day, and they look upon it as one of the necessary actions of a reasonable being.' The injunction of 'temperance, industry, exercise, and cleanliness . . . the lessons enjoined to the young ones of both sexes,' seems unnecessary; except possibly for exercise, the usefulness of which would not, perhaps, be immediately apparent to the reasonable young.

The clean skin of the Houyhnhnms, in short, is stretched over a void; instincts, emotions and life, which complicate the problem of cleanliness and decency, are left for the Yahoos with the dirt and the indecorum. Reason, Truth and Nature serve instead; the Houyhnhnms (who scorn metaphysics) find them adequate. Swift too scorned metaphysics, and never found anything better to contend for than a skin, a surface, an outward show. An outward show is, explicitly, all he contends for in the quite unironical *Project for the Advancement of Religion*, and the difference between the reality of religion and the show is, for the author of the *Tale of a Tub*, hardly substantial. Of Jack we are told, 'nor could all the world persuade him, as the common phrase is, to eat his victuals like a Christian.' It is characteristic of Swift that he should put in these terms, showing a complete incapacity even to guess what religious feeling might be, a genuine

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conviction that Jack should be made to kneel when receiving the Sacrament.

Of the intensity of this conviction there can be no doubt. The Church of England was the established ' common form,' and, moreover, was Swift's church: his insane egotism reinforced the savagery with which he fought to maintain this cover over the void, this decent surface. But what the savagery of the passage from the *Digression* shows mainly is Swift's sense of insecurity and of the undisguisable flimsiness of any surface that offered.

The case, of course, is more complex. In the passage examined the ' surface ' becomes, at the most savage moment, a human skin. Swift's negative horror, at its most disturbing, becomes one with his disgust-obsession: he cannot bear to be reminded that under the skin there is blood, mess and entrails ; and the skin itself, as we know from *Gulliver,* must not be seen from too close. Hypertrophy of the sense of uncleanness, of the instinct of repulsion, is not uncommon ; nor is its association with what accompanies it in Swift. What is uncommon is Swift's genius, and the paradoxical vitality with which this self-defeat of life—life turned against itself—is manifested. In the *Tale of a Tub* the defeat is also a triumph ; the genius delights in its mastery, in its power to destroy, and negation is felt as self-assertion. It is only when time has confirmed Swift in disappointment and brought him to more intimate contemplation of physical decay that we get the Yahoos and the Struldbrugs.

Here, well on this side of pathology, literary criticism stops. To attempt encroachments would be absurd, and, even if one were qualified, unprofitable. No doubt psycho-pathology and medicine have an interesting commentary to offer, but their help is not necessary. Swift's genius belongs to literature, and its appreciation to literary criticism.

We have, then, in his writings probably the most remarkable expression of negative feelings and attitudes that literature can offer—the spectacle of creative powers (the paradoxical description seems right) exhibited consistently in negation and rejection. His verse demands an essay to itself, but fits in readily with what has been said. ' In poetry,' he reports of the Houyhnhnms, ' they must be allowed to excel all other mortals ; wherein the justness of

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their similes and the minuteness as well as exactness of their descriptions are, indeed, inimitable. Their verses abound very much in both of these . . . ' The actuality of presentment for which Swift is notable, in prose as well as verse, seems always to owe its convincing ' justness ' to, at his least actively malicious, a coldly intense scrutiny, a potentially hostile attention. ' To his domesticks,' says Johnson, ' he was naturally rough ; and a man of rigorous temper, with that vigilance of minute attention which his works discover, must have been a master that few could bear.' *Instructions to Servants* and the *Polite Conversation* enforce obviously the critical bearing and felicity of Johnson's remark.

A great writer—yes ; that account still imposes itself as fitting, though his greatness is no matter of moral grandeur or human centrality ; our sense of it is merely a sense of great force. And this force, as we feel it, is conditioned by frustration and constriction ; the channels of life have been blocked and perverted. That we should be so often invited to regard him as a moralist and an idealist would seem to be mainly a witness to the power of vanity, and the part that vanity can play in literary appreciation: *sæva indignatio* is an indulgence that solicits us all, and the use of literature by readers and critics for the projection of nobly suffering selves is familiar. No doubt, too, it is pleasant to believe that unusual capacity for egotistic animus means unusual distinction of intellect ; but, as we have seen, there is no reason to lay stress on intellect in Swift. His work does indeed exhibit an extraordinary play of mind ; but it is not great intellectual force that is exhibited in his indifference to the problems raised—in, for instance, the *Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*—by his use of the concept, or the word, ' Nature.' It is not merely that he had an Augustan contempt for metaphysics ; he shared the shallowest complacencies of Augustan common sense: his irony might destroy these, but there is no conscious criticism.

He was, in various ways, curiously unaware—the reverse of clairvoyant. He is distinguished by the intensity of his feelings, not by insight into them, and he certainly does not impress us as a mind in possession of its experience.

We shall not find Swift remarkable for intelligence if we think of Blake.

F. R. Leavis.

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WHAT SHALL WE TEACH?

I.

FOR dispirited educationists an excellent tonic is Mr. George Sampson's *English for the English* (C.U.P., cheap edition, 2/6d.). Its subject is the education of children up to the age of fifteen ; but its importance is that much of it has a wider application, because the author has a clear conception of education in its bearing on problems of contemporary civilization. The book may be commended to anyone who has doubts about that relationship ; it is likely to fertilize discussion and energize effort. Many oppressive fallacies are exploded—amongst others, the vested interest of the classics, ' subject ' teaching, vocational training, the plot-and-character approach to literature, essay-writing on Lamb-lines, and so on—but it is not a mere field-day of iconoclasm. His particular, practical recommendations may provoke dissent: the energy and intelligence that produced them are wholly admirable. National life would be the richer for more teachers of such quality, and to gropers in the educational underworld light such as this is an occasion for enthusiasm. Some quotations will serve to introduce tentative suggestions for work with immediately pre-certificate forms.

To start with an acceptable enough generalization, the end of education is ' to develop the mind and soul of the children,' and especially to ensure emotional development. As we all know, as soon as he leaves school, everything is against a boy's becoming adult, even more than it was at school. At the top level the aim is to develop, in those potentially equipped, a mind critical, self-reliant and armed with standards of judgment, not imposed but attained through the exercise of trained discrimination ; much work at a university level must be attempted, because it is unlikely that they will chance on further education after school. Here, according to Mr. Sampson's convincing argument, English is of supreme

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importance as the key-subject. What he says of elementary school-children applies to everyone:

> English is thus not merely something for them to learn, but the condition of their learning everything else. All their immediate and future intellectual progress, all their developing emotional powers, all their social and industrial existence must be built, if they are to be built successfully and enduringly, upon the foundation of language communicated and communicable (p. 27).
>
> English is not really a subject at all. It is a condition of existence rather than a subject of instruction (p. 25).
>
> It is for English people the whole means of expression, the attainment of which makes them articulate and intelligible human beings, able to inherit the past, to possess the present and to confront the future. It is English in this sense that we must teach our children all day long, at all stages of their school life . . . not information, but the control and application of their own natural forces, so that they may learn gradually how to use and command the methods, tools, and processes of intellectual life for themselves (p. 11).

Of this English there are two requirements. First, the provision of a defence against environment (' It is the purpose of education, not to prepare children *for* their occupations, but to prepare children *against* their occupations '), and second, the development of reading capacity. It is a superficial view which regards the former as ' destructive,' ' negative,' and the latter as positive: the mind aware of its cultural surroundings will be more adequate to literature, and thus more fit for existence. So that for junior work I should attempt something on the lines of *Culture and Environment*. Though more specialized books from that angle need devising by the appropriate experts, to deal for example with what to do about the cinema, and with recommendations for the training of musical taste, by practical criticism of dance tunes with good music perhaps.

The writer of this note once heard two boys deriding the twelve-year-old car of another boy's parent. One needn't attach too much importance to this, but it's an indication of what has to be combatted, and suggests that hardly any age is too early for

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exciting a consciousness of the power age, its abnormality, and the emergent problems, mass-production and ' under-consumption,' the effects on living, why cars are made to wear out quickly, the active and passive use of leisure, urban helplessness, technological tenuousness, and so on. This can be done in several ' subjects,' which taught in this way can be given a much needed coherence and significance ; a common angle of approach would save much of the energy dissipated in switching inconsequently from subject to subject, meaningless in isolation. Of work at fifteen and below a correspondent says ' it is a mistake to try what one might call theoretical culture before they have acquired some actual culture . . . the school's job is to make them acquire it before they are sixteen or seventeen by encouraging the right environment, reading and use of leisure rather than by actual teaching and explanation. A boy will never grasp why you condemn certain abuses until he has learnt some absolute values (or begun to learn them) . . . the greatest impoverishment that a mechanical life has brought is the lack of personal knowledge from the earliest childhood, of nature and the countryside.' Towards the acquisition of such standards help may be found in the works of W. Wilkinson (Bles, 3/6d.), Adrian Bell (Cobden-Sanderson, 3/6d.), Constantin-Weyer's *Forest Wild* (Routledge, 7/6d.), *Erewhon* (Dent, 2/-), Cobbett's *Rural Rides* (Dent, 3/6d.), some of Hardy's novels, the first story in E. M. Forster's *The Eternal Moment* (Arnold) compared perhaps with *Huckleberry Finn* (Chatto, 3/6d.), etc. Additions could probably be made to this short list of books calculated to prompt a sceptical attitude towards mechanical progress and material standards of living, by exposing them to contrast with rural civilization, and in other ways. The publications connected with the C.P.R.E. and the D.I.A. (6 Queen Square, Bloomsbury, W.C.1) are helpful for this purpose: junior artists might for instance redesign their local garages, and learn something of town-planning, so that when they become city fathers they may have some civic sense. Perhaps it is too much to hope that the Board of Education may some day regularly promote the work of the C.P.R.E. in schools, by introducing elementary sociology. With a start on such lines, the products of elementary education especially would be less perfectly adapted for exploitation.

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II.

Outworn loyalties absorbed from parents, education, and the environment generally have to be displaced—nationalism, false patriotism, and so on. Displacement alone incurs the charge of cynicism ; and inherited sanctions, *e.g.* religious, may be made to help—any bias towards health should be given direction. Patriotism, not sufficiently distinguished from jingoism by the enlightened, can be diverted into irrigant channels ; by enquiring, for example, which is the true patriot, Lord Lloyd, President of the Navy League, propaganding for armament and its vested interest, or the person who fights for his village, town or country against the suburbanizing gangrene by supporting the C.P.R.E. A lazy can be turned into an active patriotism ; it should not be left for canalization by Lord Beaverbrook and the brewing cohort.

Especially in history, if forcible feeding for next year's certifying does not prevail, there are opportunities for inspecting many current fallacies—competition, business efficiency, work for work's sake, the assumption that the manual labourer is a dangerous animal to be starved into non-striking submission, economy and spending ramps, the penal system and so on. In history-cum-geography, the study of various cultures (Chinese, Mexican, Corean) is a pursuit which doesn't need ' making interesting,' and the topic of war seems to be a fascinating one. Perhaps it is superfluous to commend *The Secret International* (U.D.C., 6d.) or its offspring *The Bloody Traffic,* the Chemical Warfare chapter from *What will be the Character of a New War ?* (Gollancz, 5/-), which the publisher reprinted and distributed free (it would be a service to continue it for sale as a pamphlet), some of Sir Norman Angell's books, and to revive curiosity, the *Daily Express* book of war photographs. There seem to be a few interesting junior history books of the quality of those produced by Batsfords, Van Loon's work (Harrap) and D. H. Lawrence's *Movements in European History* (Oxford).

So much of what goes on within the educational machine being waste, it is imperative to ultilize the slightest chances. Even Latin (perhaps through Classical History) might be made a cultural subject, if someone will show how. Again, a certain amount of time is spent in practising the précis required for examinations.

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This is usually taught with collections of unprofitable historical passages, to which an obvious alternative is a tendencious selection of quotations from such books as Angell's *Press and the Organisation of Society*, the works of R. H. Tawney, Ponsonby's *Falsehood in Wartime*, Dr. Trotter's book on the herd, and those mentioned in preceding paragraphs. Here a start could be made on elementary literary criticism by showing how *Times* leaders and political speeches reduce to nothing when stripped of evasions and dead metaphor, in what way a Lamb essay is a heavily trimmed trifle, and by distinguishing between legitimate explication and smoke-screens.

This would as least involve close attention to words ; and all work requiring this will help to develop reading capacity. The simplest kind of practical criticism (*e.g.* the differentiation between weak and effective descriptions, etc., and criticism by pupils of each others' efforts to imitate a given style) can be introduced at 10-13 years. At this and the next stage there are exciting text-books to be written—one for instance beginning by discovering the difference between an economical and a flabby treatment of similar points, and the ways in which politicians of opposed parties will deal with the same set of facts, and attaining some simple discussion of the emotive as opposed to the logical, or referential, use of words. There would be plenty of varied exercises with a detective interest. By the certifiable stage, criticism of the ending of *David Copperfield* in appropriate terms is within the reach of intelligent pupils. (There are some instructive specimens of corrupt prose in *A Strong Hand at the Helm*, Gollancz, 2/6d.). Probably not much poetry should be read, but that depends on the sort of pupil you have at the moment. Not unsubtle analysis of poetry (*e.g.* Blake's *Tyger*) can be profitable at as early as 10-11, and in this connection a correspondent suggests:

> 1. Detailed work on a poem is better than hasty readings of several, so long as it doesn't become tedious.
>
> 2. Inferior verse *can* be useful. But
>
> The more *good* verse that is made familiar at that age the better—even if they only assimilate 10 per cent. of the total content. The problem is, is there enough good verse that can be used for such purposes?

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From the peace or war issue mentioned above, may branch an interest in ' war poetry,' with opportunities at the 15-16 stage or earlier of desentimentalizing and introducing a new kind of poetry, by contrasting Owen's poems (Chatto, 3/6d.) with the posturing of Brooke (Benn, 6d.—cf. ' If I should die . . . ' with part of *Strange Meeting*) leading higher up in the school to the subtler comparison of Owen with the mere horror-reaction of Sassoon (Benn, 6d.). To compare Section IV, ' These fought in any case,' of Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (Faber, 3/6d.) with Binyon's *For the Fallen* (*Poems of To-day*) is too easy game for a sixth form. Where possible it is desirable to employ sheets of unsigned poems ; these can be duplicated at very cheap rates for thirty or more copies, which after use, should be carefully collected to avoid infringement of copyright. The training desiderated here should not lay any fresh burden upon learners ; it aims not at imposing a fresh apparatus, but at encouraging intelligence to develop where it exists. School time-tables need not more subjects but an improved apparatus to assimilate what they offer. Very likely it is mere prejudice which accounts for the observation that the proportion of intelligent curiosity, which seems just to preponderate in a first form, is reversed by the time the sixth form is reached.

III.

Various objections are by now audible. ' Ah,' it will be said, ' aren't you putting Ideas into the children's heads? ' Or, ' Education other than that based upon free enquiry is undesirable.' In practice, you must put a good many ideas into their heads ; even if discredited by the best theories of education, it is necessitated and justified by the urgent shortage of time. In an ordinary school, all the time a literary education is striving to sharpen percipience and to provide standards, it is fighting a running engagement against the environment. Slight indoctrination may be incident, but so far from trying to produce a ' type ' or to disseminate propaganda, one wants to provide the potentially intelligent with the equipment necessary for criticizing amongst other things their education. Again in practice one need not have much fear of type-moulding: forcible feeding defeats its own ends.

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'You're wrong-headed; what you need is a sound psychological basis' is another form of objection. One may agree that schools might well have a psychiatrist attached, for a good deal of misery might thus be obviated in boarding schools. The maladjustments caused by monasticism for instance seem to be radical and often permanent, and one comes across badly twisted cases (frequently caused by a bad home environment) where straightening must be preliminary to all else. But when psychology is put into practice, it cannot stand alone; it cannot answer the query 'What kind of person do you consider desirable?' By any standards of psychology that one hears of, a person may be psychologically healthy, and yet be coarse and insensitive, according to the scale of values acquired through literature. Possibly also the emotional education to be had from the intelligent study of English might prevent minor disorders from reaching the psychiatrist.

Political workers may inquire 'What bearing has this educational preoccupation upon the really urgent problems of the day?' Or, if one asserts that a serious political platform will include proposals for education, 'Why do you not advocate the inculcation of some positive economic programme?' The argument comes, from those more concerned with political machinery than the ends to be worked for: 'The Walpole "culture" we all deplore is the product of the economic environment; to enjoy a better you must do away with the environment.' That is truth, but only half-truth, and thus fatally disabling, because it stops short of what should be a central problem of politics, and falsifies the issues. In civilizations which have given a measure of satisfaction, the nutrition for, and the incitement to, life were provided by the culture which was rooted in and integral with the means of obtaining material livelihood. This state is unlikely to be duplicated in any conceivable future for the west, and if there is to be a culture, it must be independent of whatever economy is in operation, and its continuity be preserved by conscious effort. Once lost it is not likely to be recovered.

Education should be directed towards producing a consciousness of this situation. To quote from the leaflet outlining the policy of *Scrutiny* in education:[1] 'The political strength of the

[1]To be obtained from the Editors.

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movement is that it makes an entirely fresh approach to the essential problems of politics—an approach that circumvents old obstacles and impasses, because it goes behind and beneath the inveterate preconceptions and prejudices.' To those who demand uncritical allegiance to one or another party formula, one can only offer the assurance that the education proposed would enable the young to diagnose contemporary civilization and mobilize some impetus to cure it. Again, to some this may appear flippant or solemn, and they will not be reassured if I say that this diagnosis will recognize some left-wing politicians to be as clearly symptoms of a decaying civilization as Sir Oswald Mosley or the Salvation Army, with whom indeed they have much in common—the easy escape, the simple solution, the conviction of self-righteousness. People educated in this way would not be easily knocked off their balance by emotive surges in undefined directions, but they would be more deeply revolutionary than many propagandists for the economic revolution which is urgently desirable, in that they would have a more radical insight into the ills of megapolitan civilization. Political enthusiasts of the simpler kind assure us that this or that must be done at once. Those who lack their virile confidence may fear that if one of the revolutionary programmes offered us were effected, we should be (culturally) in a worse because more ineluctable plight. This is not to disparage disinterested effort in the political sphere, or to deny its necessity. Obviously the more people seriously interested in politics the better. What we need to establish is a criterion of seriousness.

DENYS THOMPSON.

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FLEET STREET AND PIERIAN ROSES[1]

Conduct, on the other hand, the soul
' Which the highest cultures have nourished '
To Fleet Street where
Dr. Johnson flourished ;

Beside this throughfare
The sale of half-hose has
Long since superseded the cultivation
Of Pierian roses.

' The excuse for setting down one's life—the only excuse—is that one should give a picture of one's time,' Ford Madox Ford wrote in the introduction to his reminiscences, *Return to Yesterday*, published three years ago. It covers the first half of the period (from the Nineties to the present) that is reflected from another angle in Bernard Falk's *He Laughed in Fleet Street* which, long ago in its fifth impression, has been described as ' the success of the autumn publishing season.' The former attracted little notice when it appeared, which is an excuse for calling attention to it now, since its value, already considerable, is more than doubled by this collocation. Together these books present a sufficiently complete picture of the time preceding ours—1890 to 1914—and without much overlapping ; they reflect two slices, the upper and under, of that world, and it is an instructive exercise to compare the differences that result from living in the world of letters and living below it in the world of journalism.

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[1]*Bernard Falk : He Laughed in Fleet Street (1933).*
Ford Madox Ford : Return to Yesterday (1931).

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Ford was Conrad's collaborator, the friend of Henry James, W. H. Hudson and Ezra Pound, and founder and editor of the once famous *English Review* ; Falk was trained on the Hulton press, became one of Northcliffe's right-hand men, and edited the *Dispatch*. The difference is immediately obvious in their attitudes to certain key-figures of their time—*e.g.* Northcliffe and Lloyd George: to Falk, as to Tom Clarke (see *My Northcliffe Diary*) and to Hamilton Fyfe (see *Northcliffe*), they are the gods and giants of their world ; to Ford, they are figures from an underworld that rise out of the mud for a moment's ironical contemplation. These worlds in fact are separated even more sharply by values than by space. Only once do they meet, in the symbolical clash, at Ford's first London party, between Conrad and Lewis Hind the journalist. ' Hind in a perfectly sincere mood had congratulated him because his name was on all the hoardings in London. Conrad's *Nostromo* was then being serialised in a journal that gave the fact unusual prominence in its advertisements. Conrad on the other hand despised the journal, and himself more for letting his work appear in it.' In consequence Conrad tried to throw the journalist down the stairs—' he had really taken the congratulations of Mr. Hind as gloatings over his bitter poverty ; bitter and dreadfully harassing poverty alone had driven Conrad, mercilessly, to consent to that degradation of his art.'

For the educated reader the problem is not to decide which of the two sets of values represented by these books is the juster, but how to explain his own position to those who cannot see what is to be said against Falk's ; how, in short, to demonstrate to the unsympathetic, practically and convincingly, that the values of the one world are superior to those of the other. It is a problem with which Ford's world was not faced, but it is perhaps the most irritating daily necessity to anyone now engaged in education (or even criticism) at whatever stage and level. And these two books provide a convenient exercise for that purpose. Placing them side by side, one can insist on certain differences in the quality of the minds that produced them, and proceed to general consideration of the nature of the worlds that nourish such attitudes and habits of mind.

Falk's is a valuable document because he is completely of his world and perfectly innocent of any other values—therefore, unlike

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Hamilton Fyfe, for instance, he is never uneasy, shows no animus and is not concerned to fend off anticipated criticism. To Falk, ' supreme artists ' are the journalists on the *Star* ' who would often take up the best part of an hour . . . with fashioning four erudite lines, complete with headlines, that shouted of wit and culture to the whole world,' ' vying with one another for the honour of turning out the most sparkling paragraph or bright '; in this world the highest flights of human intellect are quite genuinely felt to be represented by the *Star* men: ' Where again, I ask myself, shall we look for as picturesque an order of men to give Fleet Street character and singularity, and make it a place apart, genius written across its brow, and wit stamped on its heart?,' and just as literary talent is shown by finding a smart headline—*e.g.* ' Light Caught Bending ' for the experiment that tested Einstein's theory—so poetic talent is measured by ability to write a sonnet for a leader page on a topical subject at a moment's notice. Pater, George Moore and Charles Morgan stand dimly for ' Literature '—' perfected phrases ' that you secretly find tiresome but know you ought to like, while real literary genius—*i.e.* writing you can admire *and* enjoy— is just as inevitably represented by Kipling, Winston Churchill, Ivor Brown and the rest. The high spots of emotional experience are ' seeing Tree as Malvolio, hearing Caruso sob in *Pagliacci*, Mme. Patti sing *Home Sweet Home* . . . ' For this world the sole morality is to be able to declare ' No editor could ever say I planted a " dud " [interview] on him '; its humour is the schoolboy joke ; the tone of its social intercourse bar-room jocularity ; and its outlook dominated by the cynical ' disillusion ' that goes with the most specious optimism and yields at a touch to sentimentality ; its religious sense is satisfied by the crudest substitutes—' Imbued with a deeply religious sense there was a period when Lord Beaverbrook attended every one of Gipsy Smith's Evangelical meetings,' and Falk proudly notes that A. J. Russell, whose *For Sinners Only* ' has developed the status of a best-seller, a sign that Heaven has smiled on his pen,' was trained on the *Dispatch* and *Express*.

The final judgment on the individual mind produced by this world is that in its most successful form it is not merely commonplace but maddeningly trivial and immature. It is hard to realize, for instance, how Mr. Falk's large, drearily cheerful, joke-packed book can be a best seller. In its three hundred and thirty pages

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there is only one suggestion of introspection. Congratulating himself on having secured a particularly outspoken interview from Baron Goto, he has a moment's doubt of its value—' But what stirred behind the mask of the spoken word and the frank countenance? How near could a Westernized brain reach to a genuine understanding of the trained Japanese mind? ' Crude as this is, it is instantly dismissed with the complacent apology, ' But what time has a busy journalist for private mental satisfactions? '

None indeed ; and to the obstinate Philistine who insists that Falk's account of the nervous wear-and-tear and exhausting devotion of the journalist working for Northcliffe reads very like Ford's description of the agonies of Conrad and himself when engaged in literary composition, one can only reply in some such analysis as that offered above, the difference *not* of the literary product—' sensational serials ' and ' saucy, catchy articles ' on the one hand and *Nostromo* and *Heart of Darkness* on the other, for some literary training is needed to apprehend that—but of the whole order that lives by each scheme of values.

And yet, it would be argued, Falk himself winds up his life's story with the consoling reflection that ' the journalist who has completed his innings can still hope to preserve, unsullied, those youthful ideals of which life has denied him fruition ' and that he has ' gained in mental stature, in judgment and in *a sense of correct values*.' But that is precisely where the issue lies. If Fleet Street's are correct values, then Conrad's are not ; that world whose various aspects are represented by Northcliffe, Bottomley, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Gilbert Frankau and A. J. Russell, is the world that now, unless we fight against it individually, we are all obliged to live in. Ford's world of letters and art, of the humane values, could exist apart, sure of superiority and privilege ; that stopped, with *Return to Yesterday*, in 1914, and in the later half of Falk's memoirs, which carry on to 1933 with a picture of our own time, we see the supersession of all that Conrad and Henry James stood for by the Fleet Street ethos. It appears that the transmutation of values that the journalist's ethos represents has undermined that upper world and, to shift the metaphor, infected its contemporary representatives. It is not merely that there is probably to-day no novelist in England who would not positively jump at the chance of seeing his name on all the

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hoardings in London. Ford and Falk, Conrad and Lewis Hind, could not find one spot of common ground ; there was no doubt where they stood or what they stood for. But Falk's picture ends with Northcliffe House besieged by the more promising of the post-War *littérateurs*. Now that the Bright Young People of that period have scrambled into the *Sunday Referee* and the really young take English honours at the older universities as the first step to a post on the *Daily Mail*, and the spirit of *The Good Companions* has replaced the more fastidious code of pre-War novelists—it is difficult to tell who is on which side, and hard enough to make out even which side is which. And it is not the world of letters alone that is affected, but every branch of society.

A paragraph from *Return to Yesterday*, commenting on the present situation, will suggest the more general argument:

' I suppose, after having studied the matter all my life, that what is most necessary for Literature—or for any art or for any human pursuit!—is a standard. That is something to kick off from or to kick. If it is good you work according to its dictates. If it is bad you gain inspiration from fighting it. A body like the French Academy is probably more detrimental than not to the production of any of the arts or even the sciences. But its existence does this much good, that it shows the State as honouring thought. The position of a writer, an artist, or a pure scientist, is one of some dignity in France. I hear the Anglo-Saxon reader gasping with astonishment. Yet just above where I sit now writing lives a French naval officer of the rank of Vice-Admiral. The day before yesterday somebody told him I was a poet. Yesterday he got out his Panhard and drove a hundred miles or so to a forest in Savoy and with great labour of his hands and a tyre-wrench, dug up a root of asphodel. This he brought back to me that I might plant it in my garden. He said that poets ought to have asphodels in their gardens. I cannot quite figure any American Admiral thinking that my friend Ezra Pound ought by the Navy to be supplied with fabulous classical plants or any British one doing as much for Mr. T. S. Eliot.'

In case this does not carry sufficient weight, two further incidents may be usefully advanced. The first is also from *Return to Yesterday*.

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'At a time when France was in very dire financial straits, the franc tumbling to nothing in value and panic beginning to appear in the land, I had to wait for an hour in the railway station of a village only just outside the devastated districts. There was around the station door a queer collection of vehicles, from the oddest of farm carts to small motors and push bicycles. There was also a small crowd of pedestrians. They were waiting for the train from Paris. It came ; they crowded to the station bookstall and each came away with a paper. It was the first number of a new literary review. I asked a man I knew what this meant. He said: "Well, I have had to put down my motor car. So I read more." The other purchasers were peasants, graziers, small tradesmen and *petite bourgeoisie* in general. They had all had to put down something so they read more and wanted instruction as to what to read.'

The second is this. In a well-known democratic organization, which exists to remedy for adults the educational deficiencies of our elementary school system, and now finds itself threatened with financial straits, a motion was proposed that English studies should be the first sacrificed as being of least use to the commonwealth. The motion was, as it chanced, defeated, but (a) it was proposed, and (b) what reason is there in England to suppose that, next time, it will not be carried and acted upon?

Q. D. LEAVIS.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

ART FOR THE COMMON READER

ART NOW, by Herbert Read (Faber and Faber, 12/6d.).
ART AND COUNTERFEIT, by Margaret Bulley (Methuen).
THE MODERN MOVEMENT IN ART, by R. H. Wilenski (Faber and Faber).

If you trouble to talk or write about art at all, it means that you want to compare your experience in front of a picture with someone else's, and that you believe it's possible to. You believe also that one response to a picture may be more satisfying than another. This is enough, without any metaphysical implications which it may or may not have, to set the scene for the fundamental activities of education and persuasion. Both these activities consist in making it possible for someone else to see things from a new angle which you hope he will prefer to the old, and any authoritarian or propagandist measures that you may resort to in practical training and missionizing will always be more or less undesirable distortions of the simple underlying process. (' Persuasion ' seems to be a useful word, if its senses of propaganda and irrational suggestion can be excluded, for the process of mutual education between people who already agree in much but who differ in the finer points of taste). The one essential for education and persuasion is the means of communicating your experiences.

But this by itself is not enough. Your experience is not a circumscribed fact to be either communicated or not ; you have to communicate it in fuller and fuller detail and extension until

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it makes sense to someone else. The neurotic patient who suffers a black depression at the sound of church bells can ' communicate his experience ' to the extent of telling you that he is depressed. And the art critic may indicate his enthusiasm for a picture. Neither will succeed in persuasion because he will not have shown you how the picture or the sound of bells is related to what you already regard as adequate grounds for enthusiasm or depression. On the other hand you may for all sorts of reasons copy the art critic's habit of enthusiasm for the picture—his prestige, the attractive way he expresses his emotion, the chance of being in the fashion, these and endless other causes may lead you to agree and follow. ' Initiation ' seems a good word for the process of getting people to become enthusiastic about, say, a picture for any causes of this sort ; without, that is, showing them that the new liking is a natural and welcome outcome of the old.

If any art criticism can fairly be called initiation, Herbert Read's *Art Now* can be. What Herbert Read does in effect is to assert the value of ' modern ' art and to provide fascinating theories and vocabularies with which you can rationalize your enthusiasm for it if you happen to accept his view or agree with him already. At no point throughout the book does he relate his enjoyment to any visible part of any picture. Instead we are given a haze of intellectual theory whose main effect on a docile reader will be to make him feel comfortable with a new fashion in painting without ever having to come face to face with the pictures and commit himself to a direct response.

It is best to admit at once that no one can state finally where the ' direct response ' ends, at what point the theory behind painting becomes irrelevant, or how much exactly is ' visible ' in a picture. It would be some help if art critics even recognized the existence of these problems. But few people will doubt that in *Art Now* the connection between the theories (whatever we may think of them) and the pictures has become altogether too tenuous. The notion of ' integral vision,' for instance, is developed in relation to Matisse, several of whose paintings are reproduced ; yet not a single reference is made to any one of the reproductions, not even for the purpose of indicating where the all-important ' focal point ' is located. Page 129 of the book seems unique in that it contains a reference to one of the illustrations, to two in fact. These are

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reproductions of a painting by Picasso and another by Dali, and all that Herbert Read has to say of them is that they ' depend for their appeal on unconscious factors.' Other signs that the book must be regarded as initiation rather than education are the painstaking provision of an esoteric terminology and the inflation of simple ideas. The latter may be illustrated from the reference to ' . . . one of the primary functions of a work of art which is to objectify our sense of visual pleasure, simply to please the sight.' The structure of the sentence is uncertain, but apparently ' simply to please the sight ' is an alternative way of saying ' objectify our sense of visual pleasure.' Sham profundity of this kind comes out again and again, as for instance in the defence of abstract art (which anyhow needs no defence but discriminating enjoyment) by a glaringly invalid comparison between the art impulses of primitive man, in Worringer's speculative and unconvincing reconstruction of them, and the urges which Herbert Read imagines he can detect behind modern art.

An inevitable corollary of the precedence of initiation over education is the erratic fluctuation of fashion in art taste. It is this that makes possible amongst our desperate nationalist boosting of the moment the more or less hesitating return to the pre-Raphaelites. From *The Spectator* of January 19th, one learns that this return is possible because ' we ' no longer concern ourselves entirely with design but look for texture and finish as well (having apparently managed to exclude these from consideration during the previous fashion). ' We ' in fact can tolerate the pre-Raphaelites' feebleness because we never had any good reasons for disliking them—or anything else.

Genuine education and ' persuasion ' are of course to be found, and there is every reason to feel gratitude for, say, Roger Fry's *Cézanne* (1927) and R. H. Wilenski's *Modern Movement in Art* (1927), in so far as they do redirect our attention while we actually look at the pictures and do therefore offer us a new way of experiencing them. Among the devices which Wilenski makes good use of for discussion is that of pairing illustrations in order to indicate his points by means of comparisons and contrasts. The same method was employed, for a rather simpler purpose, by Margaret Bulley in *Art and Counterfeit* (1925). There can be little doubt of the enormous value of this device for communicating

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a discrimination. It seems in fact to be one of the fundamental methods of education and persuasion, not only in art but in other subjects too.

But merely to draw attention, even by this method, to the pictures you are talking about is not in itself an insurance against one very serious danger which faces the educator. In training taste in art this is the danger that discrimination will rest not on a direct response to the picture but on indirect clues. Margaret Bulley has more than once quoted the crudest instance of this, that of the boy who said that whenever he saw a picture he didn't like he called it art and could then be sure of being right. The danger of course exists in much subtler forms. The slight mis-proportioning, the faintly wooden expression, the lack of suavity of line, and other hints of archaism in a Madonna may be enough to lead the spectator to a perfectly 'correct' preference. His choice is by inference in relation to social standards which he has accepted, and not by direct personal preference for the picture. This is a danger which will always be greater when, as in art appreciation, the educator has difficulty in finding explicit and intelligible standards. If he merely ejaculates 'harmony,' 'creative energy,' 'painted with feeling,' 'quality of rhythm' in front of some pictures and not others, the docile learner easily discriminates by *indirect* clues which is to be approved and which not. Learning to do this trains one's aesthetic sensibility just about as much as learning to distinguish between one breed of dog and another.

This is in fact an obvious weakness in Margaret Bulley's book. Secure in the conviction of the elusiveness and indefinability of the informing spirit of art she makes too little attempt to formulate her standards of judgment. In comparing photographs of the same objects her comment is '. . . the work of the artist has a unity, a density of matter, an order, a sense of purpose, and above all a vitality.' All these terms may mean something, but what exactly they mean, and how they apply to observable features of the pictures, we are not told. The more evident difference between the painting and the photographs, the one which the uninitiated sees at once, is the sort of muddiness and blurredness of the paintings; and so he has his first indirect clue to what are the right noises to make. Much more exact indications of the features that seem important are necessary if one's appreciation of a picture is to be

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made accessible to someone else. This greater exactness is possible: Fry and Wilenski, for example, occasionally suggest that you should cover up one feature of a painting and see whether that makes certain specified differences. And still more detailed demonstration is possible and desirable.

The attempt to be more definite would have brought to the fore and challenged a weakness which runs through most of the criticism considered here: that is, the disproportionate stressing of the design or ' formal aspects ' of pictures, of the unity presented by the picture at the perceptual level, apart from any conceptual significance its forms may have. Even within the limits of this aspect of art the stress has often been uneven. Following Roger Fry's preoccupation with volume and recession, Margaret Bulley makes solidity and firmness virtues in themselves, and anyone who absorbed her teaching and nothing else would almost inevitably fail to enjoy much of the best Chinese painting and any other work, Francis Towne's for instance, which relies chiefly on two-dimensional design. No one need dispute the importance of the formal aspects of art and it may be arguable that they are the most important aspects. Undoubtedly, too, the emphasis given by writers like Fry and Wilenski to three-dimensional design enriches one's liking for much art.

But in practice this has entailed a comparative neglect of techniques for criticizing the sentiments and attitudes conveyed by pictures ; this is probably the reason for the rareness of relevant criticism of *surréaliste* painting. Wilenski has a vaguely derogatory section on ' Romantic ' art in which he puts painters whose concern with emotion is too insistent to be ignored, but he attempts no critical examination of their work ; of say, Renoir's sentimentality or the apparent irony of Dégas. Margaret Bulley, having left ' design ' a nebulous concept, attempts to sum up all she thinks about a picture, including her judgment on the attitudes it offers, under emotive statements concerning its design and ' harmony.' In comparing Millais' ' Christ in the House of His Parents ' with a Pietà she says: ' Emotional intensity is expressed in both pictures, but in [the Millais] the emotion is limited to the occasion described, while in [the Pietà] it takes on a universal character. Grief and pain are lost in an underlying and transfiguring harmony, order, and significance.' For any except the most suggestible hearers, or

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those who already agree, this is a most ineffectual way of contrasting the weak pathos of the one with the tragedy of the other. But the features which make for these qualities could without any doubt be indicated. They would not, however, be limited to the formal aspects of the picture.

Before there can be adequate discussion of questions of this kind there must be a much closer definition of design and a much closer study of the relation between the formal aspects of art and the emotions conveyed. It is important to consider, for instance, how far and in what way a design can be sentimental when it is not representational. Though it almost certainly may be, still it seems essential to recognize that a picture may give or withold two distinguishable kinds of satisfaction: that which comes from the experience of integrated unity in sufficiently complex perceptual presentations, and that coming from the provision of an adequate attitude to an interesting situation which has conceptual significance. Or, more simply and perhaps more accurately, from design and from the expression of attitudes and feelings towards something other than the design. But the problems raised here and the terms needed for discussing them demand a much more careful examination than they seem so far to have had.

The question of terminology goes deep. For education and persuasion it is essential to begin from the spectator's genuine interest and likings, whether he likes naturalistic representation, 'pastel shades,' or anything else. If you can then demonstrate some other way of looking at a particular picture, and if that way pleases him more than the old, a beginning at education has been made. If on the other hand you state as a general principle, emotionally or authoritatively, that what he now likes is 'not art' and that he should look for something else, then you have merely begun initiation. What seems to be most needed in art criticism is detailed discussion of particular pictures from as many points of view as possible. But before detailed discussion is profitable a few intelligibly defined terms are necessary. The point may be illustrated from *Art Now*, where Herbert Read quotes a passage by Roger Fry: 'What happens to us when we are thrilled by the beauty of Rembrandt's drawing is that the peculiar rhythms of his lines transmit to us, not only the likeness of a sow, but also Rembrandt's imaginative excitement as he apprehended certain

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relations of form in what he contemplated, and that excitement and exaltation depended upon his peculiarly intense emotional reaction to life, an emotion expressed in his case through his specific sense of visible form.' Herbert Read has no difficulty in showing that with a few verbal changes the same argument will justify the kind of painter Roger Fry was condemning. What he ignores, however, is the fact that the same 'argument' could just as plausibly be brought forward for a magazine cover—for any picture whatever. By means of the same verbal formula he and Roger Fry are merely ejaculating antithetic opinions; neither has taken one step towards telling the other what in the pictures his enjoyment springs from.

J. M. HARDING and D. W. HARDING.

MUSIC AND THE COMMUNITY

MUSIC AND THE COMMUNITY, The Cambridgeshire Report on the Teaching of Music (Cambridge University Press, 3/6d.).

Music is probably the art that can record the most definite advance in England during the last thirty years and particularly since the war. The minority that concerns itself with culture has so little encouragement at the moment that I shall not apologise for repeating the rather trite comparison between the position to-day and the position at the end of the last century: it suggests many things that are not the sole care of musicians but are of interest to all artists. At the turn of the century music was still very far from the centre of English culture; the majority of educated people were not ashamed to admit ignorance of it, and it was still tolerated rather as an innocent diversion for young ladies than as a valuable mode of experience. The truth is that the period of bourgeois rule had only a very feeble hold on either the popular or the educated traditions that had sustained English life before the Industrial Revolution, and music was suffering

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with many other of the finer aspects of the English genius: how else can one explain an equivocal figure like Tennyson or the acceptance of Lamb and Dickens as the descendants of Addison and Fielding? But the sordidness of a period fast losing its ideals of good taste and good sense weighed more heavily on music than on any other art, partly through a series of accidents but largely because the traditional life of England, possessed down to the end of the 18th century, was so much bound up with the popular music that underlay the imposing achievements of the Elizabethans and Purcell. Though England had no first-rank composers in the 18th century she was absolutely filled with music. In the 19th century she had ceased to trouble about it: the way was open for all the forces of mass production, shoddy thinking and trivial living. Music, that had more than anything else satisfied the leisure of Shakespeare's contemporaries in all classes, was being replaced by the meretricious attractions of the novel.

Yet from this depth, in the memory of many now living, English music has been to some extent rescued. Without unduly flattering our generation we must recognize that a powerful minority at least has become conscious of English musical traditions. Our older composers have been reinstated among the greatest masters of the world, and together with our folk music are enriching the idiom of a by no means negligible group of modern composers. The Congress of the International Society for Musical Research in Cambridge last summer was a very typical gesture of the new feeling both at home and on the Continent, and a French visitor to it has remarked how much he was impressed by ' la grandeur du passé artistique de l'Angleterre, et cet amour de la musique qu'elle manifeste aujourd'hui.'[1]

The problem has never been a narrowly musical one ; it has been and remains primarily a cultural one. For that reason Cecil Sharp was right on insisting on the importance of folk-song, even if its revival does seem artificial in an age of jazz. For the same reason the genuineness of the revival of English music is shown in no better way than in the educational activity it has stimulated. Some of this has perhaps been misdirected, but it has nearly all been sincere, and it has touched all classes and all parts of the

[1]M. P.-M. Masson in *La Revue de Musicologie*.

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educational machine. In the infant schools rhythmic work and percussion bands have spread rapidly. A large number of secondary and modern schools now have string classes, orchestras and choirs. Even the public schools have been considerably influenced. The reading of music has improved in all types of school. Whereas in 1871 Mr. Forster, the Education Minister, excused the lack of attention given to singing by saying that ' at present the Privy Council did not find their inspectors were able to give that thorough examination which they ought to give, for the musical education of the upper and middle classes had been neglected,' the Board of Education inspectorate is now very active and intelligent in directing and encouraging every kind of musical work in the schools. The Universities now have capable bodies of amateurs as well as potential professionals. Adult education has been enthusiastically, if not always wisely, organized, and the competition festival movement has admitted many to the practice of music. Even Church music has undoubtedly improved. Despite some crudeness, these are all parts of a genuine educational movement.

The danger at the moment is that valuable effort may be wasted through lack of co-ordination. It is therefore useful that an attempt should recently have been made to gather up the experiments being made in different parts of the educational system and consider them with the needs of the whole community in mind. Such is the character of *Music and the Community*, a small book issued by the Cambridgeshire Council of Musical Education, and we commend it not only to all musicians but to all who are concerned with the wider issues of the modern community. ' The Cambridgeshire Council of Musical Education,' Prof. Dent explains in a preface to the book, ' was formed in 1924, with the encouragement of the Education Authority for that county, to foster the practice and enjoyment of music in Cambridgeshire. From the outset its policy was based on the principle that music cannot take its place as one of the main cultural activities of the community, unless its proper teaching and practice forms an important part of the life of every school and every place of adult education in village and town . . . The most obvious deficiencies, they are convinced, are due to two main causes—the want of a clearly stated understanding of the true place of music in the education of the community, and the lack of practical and authoritative

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guidance in the teaching of music both in schools and beyond.' The aim of the book is therefore practical, but it always keeps fundamental principles well in mind. To the musical educator it should be invaluable (the bibliographies at the end will alone be of great assistance to the busy teacher). But it wisely resists the temptation to be a mere list of teachers' requisites and never loses sight of its duty in raising the general standard of taste.

The position of music is a test for the artistic sensibility of a community. More than any other art its material is distinct and the kind of experience it brings alien to those of everyday life. The ordinary connotations of words and the banality of human situations are the handicap as well as the opportunity of literature: they produce all kinds of irrelevancies (How many children had Lady Macbeth?). Music's material is abstract ; it refers to nothing outside itself, and the only help to appreciating any piece of music is a past experience with another piece of music. Moreover the parts from which the music is made have no meaning separate from the whole: a single note, a single chord means nothing ; it must be related to its place in the context. This is also true of words, the material of literature ; but to realize it needs some training, and too many people are hampered by the ordinary non-literary uses of speech. It follows that the usual response to music will more often be based on a true perception of the relation of the parts to the whole than the usual response to (say) literature ; it will be less easy to mistake a spurious response for a genuine one, because there are fewer irrelevancies liable to distract the attention. For all except very sensitive intelligences musical experience is probably easier than literary experience (given equal opportunities of feeling both). Yet the kind of listening desiderated in this account of musical experience is likely to be carried over to the appreciation of other artistic experiences. The habit of concentrating on what is actually in the music itself, putting aside all irrelevancies, and of feeling each separate impulse as part of the whole—which is the only way music can mean anything more than empty sound—is good training for the arts in which one can be cheated into believing one is making a response when one is really enjoying the fantasies of one's own mind. The ability of Elizabethan audiences to listen to dramatic speeches that leave modern audiences puzzled is perhaps not unconnected

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with the general diffusion of musical culture in that period and the enjoyment of elaborate contrapuntal music.

Before music can occupy a position of such dignity as we have implied in the last paragraph the listening to music must be real listening ; and that unfortunately seems to one the respect in which contemporary England is most deficient. We can no longer complain that we have too little music ; if anything we have too much. In a recent number of *The Radio Times* Sir Michael Sadler expressed the opinion that broadcasting was making music, among other things, more ' communal ' than ever before. Whatever this may mean, it does not seem to show the slightest comprehension of what a real community is ; and it is just fatuous rotarian nonsense of this order that is threatening to cancel out the excellent musical work we have mentioned earlier in the present article. Merely scattering music throughout the country will serve real music not at all, and musicians, being notoriously eccentric, are not in the least grateful to Sir Michael Sadler or the B.B.C. Indeed in a recent address Prof. W. G. Whittaker remarked that ' music had become commonplace. They heard it in every restaurant, every hotel, every private house, and from gardens and open windows when the British climate permitted of such a luxury. The one time quiet stretches of our placid rivers, the seashore, the woodlands, and the moors were so much infested by it that they could not escape it. But it never occurred to anyone to stop talking or thinking one moment to listen to music. It is as common as dirt. People do take the trouble to clear away dirt, but no one troubles to stop music when it is unwanted.' Prof. Dent in his preface to the Cambridge Report is emphatic in the same sense. ' The Committee have observed, with some apprehension, the enormous *passive* participation in music which has been made possible by the gramophone and broadcasting . . . Neither of these inventions need be feared in a community where by tradition the listeners are also themselves *performers,* in however modest a way.'

We are obviously back here to the traditions of the communal life England had before the Industrial Revolution. Then everybody was a performer in a modest way, if only with his own voice ; and that is possible and necessary for everyone to-day if we are to have music taking its rightful place in the life of the

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community. When we are making music, however humbly, something is being created. 'Even for every one of us who sings in a chorus there is at least some creative opportunity, even in such a well-worn classic as the *Messiah*.' (Report, p. 14). Every work needs to be created afresh by the performer, even the simplest folk-song: the marks on the paper are only hints to what the composer intended. One has to remember this to get a complete picture of what is represented by *Change in the Village*. Not only had the older tradition more satisfying labour, it had more creative leisure in the time when music was the recreation of all classes.

One of the most valuable aspects of this creative participation in music is its communal emotion, which is something richer than the herd instinct because it encourages and strengthens individuality. Here again we are back to the English tradition. Shakespeare's contemporary was conscious of this kind of community. 'Music is something more than an individual possession. If in our own day it has come to be no more than an individual possession for a large number of people, it is partly due to the fact that the most popular instrument is the pianoforte, by means of which one person can command complete harmony, and partly to the fact that many people are content to listen to music without taking the trouble to make it themselves . . . Music made in co-operation with others gives us not merely the experience of music itself, but the intimate communion with our fellow-creatures in addition.' (Report, p. 12). We need scarcely stress the importance of such a conception as a counterblast to the many disintegrating and cheapening influences of to-day. The quality of the communal feeling produced by musical co-operation will depend on the maintenance of a high standard of taste. That is by no means easy in present circumstances; but fortunately academic music on the whole is showing no sign of either obscurantist pedantry or compromise with lower standards. If musical education of the kind discussed in the Cambridge Report can succeed against the forces of modern 'democracy,' English life as a whole will be the better for it.

BRUCE PATTISON.

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LIFE'S OLD BOY

LESSONS FROM THE VARSITY OF LIFE, by Lord Baden Powell (Pearson, 10/6d.).

The status of academic education was never lower than it is to-day, even among its exponents. The corpus of knowledge is so great that one don is as ignorant as the man in the street, of the labour of the don on the next staircase. Now that an elementary school-boy can become a fellow of All Souls, it is no longer even a social distinction. And there is an economic crisis ; learning does not necessarily buy bread. Competition puts a further premium on charm and an alertness not always honest, the Hatry virtues. So the Lifers have a ready hearing. Come to Mr. Hemingway's Academy for Bright Boys and learn about Life.

Lord Baden Powell, nice old gentleman as he must be, is a Lifer and a Happiness-addict, and in hard times a Lifer is as blind a guide as a don. Their thesis is roughly this—the schools give you word knowledge, theories, mental experience, but destroy in the process, or at least fail to develop, your senses, your capacity for physical experience. They produce

> ' estimable young men, able to read and write, well-behaved and amenable to discipline, and easily made into smart-looking parade soldiers—but without individuality or strength of character, utterly without resourcefulness, initiative or the guts for adventure ' (p. 272).

We will take you back

> ' to nature and backwoodsmanship, by taking the men back as nearly as possible to the primitive, to learn tracking, eye for a country, observation by night as well as by day, to learn to stalk and to hide, to improvise shelter, and to feed and fend for themselves ' (p. 237).

So far, so good. The criticism is perfectly just and the alternative both feasible and productive. Is it enough? I don't think so, and for this reason. It assumes that life, *i.e.* the material order of things outside yourself, will teach you how to act, or if you like, that action is its own teacher. It ignores the subjective world

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of feeling, thereby placing us in its power. It is fatally primitive. To say that the Backwoods life is natural and City life artificial is nonsense. The only possible meaning of 'artificial' in this connection is 'un-habitual.' Camping is really a highly artificial training for a better town life, and, valuable as it is, town life demands much more. The closer people live together, the more complex and civilized life becomes, the more one individual affects another and the more knowledge he needs about himself. It is here, to my mind, that scouting fails. Instead of treating the subjective world of feeling and impulse in exactly the same way as it treats the world of fires and knots, it falls back on the academic method of ideals. Its training of the senses has produced efficient executives but has left them irrational and thus in their very efficiency all the more dangerous.

Take two examples. Clause One of the Scout Promise: 'To do his duty to God and the King.' The bracketing of the Civitas Dei and the existing social order indicates that the scout is not encouraged to understand social structure. The accident that I personally dislike the present order is beside the point; it is an equally dangerous principle under any. Reform is always disloyalty to King, President, or Commissar.

Again Clause Ten of the Scout Law. 'To be clean in Thought, Word, and Deed.' Purity as an ideal merely places the adolescent at the mercy of his sense of guilt. If you are always scrubbing children, they will walk in puddles as soon as your back is turned. Children are no more born pure in the adult sense, than they are born observant, and they must learn it in the same way as they learn observation. All the adult can do is to make the environment as favourable to success as he can. And the same applies to courtesy, kindliness and all other virtues. To educate values by ideals is as bad as educating for action by books; it makes the same mistake—living at second hand.

The autobiography of the Chief Scout strengthens this impression. Lord Baden Powell has had an interesting career with many honours which I am sure he has deserved. Theatricals, sports, rich friendships, a happy marriage, two wars, the organization of a great youth movement, how interesting. But one would feel easier in one's mind if he were just a little less complacent about it. His Life Varsity is such a very comfortable one, and its master

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such a very genial Old Boy.

Anyone a thousand years hence reading this book would never guess that its author lived in one of the most terrible historical periods. Looking at the jolly little drawings, he would think: 'What enormous fun they all had. Such larks. Polo, cucumber sandwiches on the lawn, faithful retainers, kindly treated, who knew their station. Just one big family.'

One can easily forgive his snobbery—whatever we think of ourselves for it, we should all like to be able to say we had spoken with the King—but less easily his complete unacknowledgment of the existence of agony, hunger, disease, madness and death. His Varsity has very high walls. He has the compensating coldness of the general, and at times even an unpleasant facetious strain of cruelty.

> 'I watched with interest from my tent his further procedure with the prisoners.
>
> He cut down a small tree so that it lay about a foot above the ground, and he made the whole lot of eight men sit on the ground and put their legs under the tree with their feet projecting on the far side ; then each man had to lean over and touch his toes with his fingers ; the Hausa then came along and tied every thumb to every great toe.
>
> This was his idea of a stocks and there he left them for the night. The prisoners, however, devised a method of obtaining release—or thought they did. One of them started to yowl in a miserable way at the top of his voice, and as soon as his breath ran out the yowl was taken up by the next, and so it went on in succession. This they hoped would disturb me to such an extent that I should order their release.
>
> But before I could suggest a remedy the Hausa himself had devised one. He cut a thin whippy cane and went to the singer and smote him across the back, and then stood by the next man ready to smite the moment he began his song.
>
> The singing stopped like magic and was not resumed.
>
> The moral effect of this little episode on the rest of my force was excellent' (p. 163).

There is no hint that he was ever troubled, for example, about the moral justification of the Boer War. His only suggestion for

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ensuring peace rivals the utterances of Mr. Macdonald in its vagueness.

> 'Yes, hog-hunting is a brutal sport—and yet I loved it, as I loved also the fine old fellow I fought against. I cannot pretend that I am not inconsistent. But are many of us entirely consistent? Do what we will and say what we like, although we have a veneer of civilization, the primitive man's instincts are still not far below the surface. Murder will out. Did we not see it in all its horridness in the War?
>
> But apparently the Churches recognized the fact; at any rate one does not remember that they made any attempt to stop us killing our fellow-men, our fellow-Christians.
>
> Until we get our education upon a more spiritual foundation instead of being content with mere academical scholarship, more of character training than standard of knowledge, we shall only have the veneer' (p. 86).

(On his ideas of peace and war there is an illuminating cartoon on page 286). A charming man certainly; a great man perhaps, a civilized man, no. (For the civilized soldier see *T. E. Lawrence*, by Liddell Hart, Cape).

His scout movement is not a military movement but, though I do not for a moment suggest that he consciously intended it to be, it is a class weapon. From his experience, partly as a sportsman, partly as a soldier, the experience of the leisured officer class, he learnt the educational value of contact with nature, and wished that all classes should profit by it. For that he deserves much honour. But on the emotional side, the side of values, in his conception of the material and political embodiments of the Good Life, he never became objective. Had he done so, he would have been branded as a dangerous Socialist, and the Scout movement would have failed, because the upper classes would not have given it their support, but he might have been remembered by later generations as a master. But he did not do so and scouts, as the General Strike demonstrated, in return for favours received, and mentally defenceless, can be mobilized by the Conservatives. I must repeat that this mistake, though perhaps unusually serious at this moment, is a mistake in any society. The progress of the realization of values is like that of scientific inventions; it renders obsolete its predecessors. A state has to train its youth not only

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to be its good citizens, but to change it, *i.e.* to destroy its present existence. Educationalists must always be revolutionaries.

One half of the educational battle, the defeat of the academic in the training of the physical machine, has been fought, and Lord Baden Powell is one of its generals. The other half, the attack on the psychological front, has only just begun.

W. H. AUDEN.

CHANGE IN THE FARM

CHANGE IN THE FARM, by T. Hennell (Cambridge University Press, 10/6d.).

At this juncture one does not expect the gusto of a Cobbett, and self-effacement in an author can hardly be considered a fault. That Mr. Hennell has a deep feeling for the ancient modes is obvious from his undertaking, and the few regretful comparisons he allows himself. The young horseman buys a cinema ticket instead of a bell for the road-harness, and bottled cider is indeed as 'india-rubber tasting' as he declares. Taking into consideration the scope, length and detail of the book, there is little room for a co-ordinating personal view. The author, purposely no doubt, has kept his narrative as bare as a fallow. The old earth-principle was so full of spirit that it does shine through of its very essence, and Mr. Hennell probably knows how fatally easy it is by a word to gild that lily. As it is, the reader, even the most urban, by 'putting two and two together' must arrive at an idea of the old order which should give pause when measured against the spiritual resources of his own work and class.

Here we have a record not only of implements and usages, but also, more important, of the faith that gave men surety in the work they did. The only thing lacking is perhaps a certain muscular quality—what it felt like to handle those tools whose use he so accurately describes. Even in splitting logs, in some measure man passes into axe and axe into man. How complex a harmony then is man and scythe ; every swing an unconscious reiteration of natural law, which thus became the unfailing intuitive basis of life, growing inevitably more 'scientific,' yet rooted at the other

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extreme still in superstition. All things were possible (perhaps still are). ' They (rabbits) will bolt from their holes when the moon is wasting, for then they have the sign in their heels ; but when she is making they have the sign in their heads, and then they will sit fast.' So said a man who had spent his life ferreting.

The detail of the book is impressive, and every detail reflects the whole. As to the extent of the ' change,' the success of new machinery intrinsically different from the old, in our miniature country, is not yet proved. In special ways we still use flails and wooden ploughs, and even broadcast seed in out-of-the-way corners ; but not even in remotest East Anglia do they ' holler largess ' any more, I think, nor appoint a Lord of the Harvest. It is the spirit that has departed ; the organism is dead from within, like a hollow tree.

Mr. Hennell begins with a picture of the farmhouse, then goes on to the buildings and the ancient implements that lie rotting in them. He includes some delicate pencil sketches of wagons and ploughs. He gives a typical account of the old wheelwright, that true craftsman who gave way before the larger firm not because the larger firm made a better article, but because simply it had the better ' business ' head. Does not one remember that old tradesman who could not be bothered to make out bills till he himself was being dunned by creditors? One John Savery, Mr. Hennell records, made a plough for a local champion of such quality that in the end a large firm tried to bribe the ploughman not to compete in a match in which theirs were entered.

One would wish such a book to be longer. The glimpse of the farmhouse is but a glimpse. From the author's indications one guesses that it is one of those humble homesteads swollen to semi-Georgian grandeur about the time of the enclosures, and now left with cold and mummified front rooms, gesturing a once would-be gentility. These are back-kitchen days again for the farmer, while the artisan's wife arranges paper flowers in the front room of her council house. This suburbanism is the devil, a self-consciousness paralyzing true feeling at the source ; the natural instinct for ' betterment ' perverted by the down-trickling of late Victorianism from those forsaken drawing-rooms to the class that was the tap-root of our culture. It did not need to have its spelling corrected to be able to express itself. This is from a letter to the

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author from an old woman who did some straw-plait for him:

> 'It is quite thirty years since I have done any . . . but all that one wants is patients and I am like my Parents I always see my work done in my own mind before I begin and I don't think there is much to complain about but with more practise more perfection . . . it aint the time it takes to do the Patterns but the time it takes to get ones fingers to a certain form as all are different make of work and the hand has to get a different form of movement.'

ADRIAN BELL.

CHANGING EMPHASIS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

HISTORY, PSYCHOLOGY, AND CULTURE, by Alexander Goldenweiser (Kegan Paul, 18/- net).

Professor Goldenweiser's book is a patchwork, avowedly, made up with articles, sections of previous books, lectures, and reviews. And for this very reason it is in one way more useful to the intelligent lay public than a more unified book on a single anthropological theme could ever be. Copious references and an excellent bibliography add to its value. What unity it has comes from its representing one professed science: not a science which is one because it has been marked off from the others, but one because it has focussed selectively within a wide field, the whole of which is relevant to it, if only peripherally. In the social sciences the periphery is as important as the centre. It consists for Professor Goldenweiser in psychology, sociology, economic theory, history, and anthropological speculation; his centre is the close investigation of the material culture of peoples and their institutional mechanisms—the field-work of modern anthropology.

The 'school' of anthropology represented here, that of Boas, is not well-known to the reading public in England, though the rather similar standpoint of Malinowski and his followers in some of their work is more familiar. A collection of writings like this by a foreign writer who knows where he stands (and so lets the

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general reader get his own bearings too) is helpful in re-ordering one's perspectives. It is sobering, after insular intoxication, to see ' the voluminous but ideologically diffuse contributions of Frazer ' placed historically, and the attractively wild ideas of Elliot Smith and Perry excluded as ' falling outside the scope of ethnological science ' though the German diffusionist school is subjected to thorough criticism. It is clear how much less fascinating for the lay mind, less ' intriguing,' modern anthropology must be after *The Golden Bough* and *Children of the Sun*. Instead of brilliant speculation under romantic titles there is a grubbing about in smaller problems and some hard thinking about method and explanatory concepts. The earlier books make a more immediate and apparently more effective contribution to general thought: they subsume all the most alluring material and problems under one comprehensible scheme ; they offer an easy ordering of a charming chaos whose details enrich our emotional responses to familiar ideas.

More disciplined scientific writings are rarely so complete and effective in themselves. They contribute instead to the slower growth of a more accurate way of thinking about certain problems. And at its best this increased accuracy of technical thinking can be taken up into thinking in general. The term ' rationalization,' for instance, fixed a useful concept and made it more manageable ; recent anthropology adds a little to its significance by dwelling on definition in terms of what Goldenweiser calls ' cultural setting ' as an alternative to ' secondary explanation ' or rationalization. The cumbrous vocabulary may be regrettable but work of this kind serves to underline a distinction which can aid thinking everywhere.

The essay on Totemism, the longest in the book, is, naturally at this date, closely studied and technical, and it demands competent technical criticism or none at all. Here and in most parts of the book many non-technical readers will wish there had been more concrete illustrations of the general principles under discussion. But in spite of this and although the style is at times unwieldy, the book is not unentertaining to read. Goldenweiser exemplifies pleasantly the academic fierceness so often found among anthropologists, as for instance when he writes of ' . . . the denuded psyches of Watson's infants . . . the poor-witted morons postulated by the diffusionists.'

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Although for the greater part of the time he uses the term ' culture ' in the wide and uninteresting anthropological sense (' a branch,' he says, ' is a bit of the physical environment. A branch used as a club is culture.'), nevertheless at one point he touches upon culture in a more significant sense. This is when he refers to a paper by Sapir where he sees foreshadowed more significantly than anywhere else ' the impending deepening of the psychological approach.' This paper was an extremely interesting attempt to bring within the scope of scientific discussion the cultural loss that seems to have occured with the appearance of large industrial communities, the place that the arts can hold within them, and the relation of individual people to the tradition of the arts. It cannot be said that Sapir's discussion is close enough to be completely satisfactory and there seems to have been no development of his theme since 1924 when his paper came out. It is encouraging, however, that Goldenweiser as a technically-minded anthropologist should take account of such a paper and regard it as foreshadowing a significant development.

D.W.H.

LOUIS MADELIN : LE CONSULAT ET L'EMPIRE, 2 vols., Librairie Hachette.

In 1926 M. Madelin wrote in the preface to his admirable little book on *La France de l'Empire* : ' Je prépare depuis près de quinze ans une *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire* qui, dans la collection que dirige avec tant de succès mon ami Frantz Funck-Brentano, doit être la suite de mon *Histoire de la Révolution.*' The series of works, which appears in French as *L'Histoire de France racontee à tous*, and in English translation as The National History of France, has now, twenty-two years after the appearance of *La Révolution*, been completed by the publication of the present work. The very scope of the series has been enlarged to allow M. Madelin to devote two large volumes to his subject ; and here we have greater intimacy of treatment, with more abundant detail and more scholarly completeness, than has been possible in any of the companion volumes

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of this collection. Even so M. Madelin has not finished. On many occasions he refers his readers to a forthcoming work on a still more ample scale. In this he promises that the documentation shall be supplied and some of his judgments will be more fully explained.

The present work is not a biography of Napoleon, but picks up the story where M. Madelin had left it at the close of his *French Revolution*. It is not a history of the whole Napoleonic Empire and it does not follow the form of those studies of Napoleon which tend to become surveys of Europe, of the whole Napoleonic era. It is essentially a history of France, but whereas M. Driault's volumes are concerned only with the course of Napoleon's diplomacy, while the volume of M. Pariset in Lavisse's *Histoire de France Contemporaire* attempts the descriptive analysis of the condition of imperial France in its political, administrative, economic and religious sides, etc., M. Madelin pursues almost continuous narrative ; in 1926 he warned us to expect not a *tableau d'une société* but *l'histoire d'une période* ; from indefatigable labours he emerges with freshness and charm as a person who simply writes because he has a story to tell. In the art of constructing such a story—choosing his path across the whole historical field where so many complicated things were happening simultaneously, then assembling his material around the chosen episodes, throwing a flash-light upon significant detail but not stopping to provide ' pictures of still life '—M. Madelin has acquired great competence and follows a technique that is recognizably his. And assuredly, in spite of the length of this work, he surpasses all historians in essential brevity.

He has read vast and numberless volumes of printed sources and secondary works ; he has supplemented these with manuscript materials on occasion ; and some aspects of the Napoleonic era he has thoroughly re-examined in this or in his previous works. Also he is a Frenchman. These are the necessary qualifications for the writing of a history of Napoleon. In general it is on the diplomatic side that his work is least satisfactory ; occasionally there are small inaccuracies ; sometimes the argument does not convince and the supporting materials are too slight ; but in some cases the author promises to substantiate a thesis in the larger study of this period which he is preparing. The newest things which one

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would expect to find in a new history of Napoleonic France would probably concern the economic life and economic policy and the question of internal administration. In regard to economic affairs, social life, religious conditions, the present work gives nothing more than sudden side-lights when some episode calls for narration ; but about administrative affairs the glimpses are more revealing and M. Madelin promises a fuller analysis in the future. It is in politics and internal administration that he might be expected to be most at home. The study (Vol. I pp. 1-231) of the foundation of the dictatorship, the workings and the achievements of the new government, and the transition from the consulate to the empire will interest all those who in these days wish to study the very pattern of the statecraft which is demanded in the ' dictatorship based on the plébiscite.' The period 1805-8 (Vol. I pp. 232-252) takes the author outside France and brings him to war, diplomacy and the Grand Empire ; it is the least satisfactory section of the book both in its history and in point of form. The rest of the work is remarkable in its fulness, its continuous texture and its narrative power. It is an astonishingly close and concrete study of the mistakes of Napoleon and the downfall of the system. At the same time it contains many lively judgments that are calculated to arouse controversy.

Of the whole book we can say that in general its history has that intimacy of touch, that internal richness and complexity, that readiness with the appropriate details which enable us to be sure that its author writes out of abundance of mind ; he is not one of those authors who in their books are really telling us everything that they know. He is not open therefore to the criticism which was so justly made of Bainville's *Napoleon*: that his work is lacking in what the French call ' *fond.*' One criterion the book does not satisfy. It represents the highest thing that can be demanded of historical craftsmanship. No man has been able to describe the multifarious activities of Napoleon without depersonalizing the man, losing touch with the central character of the story. No man has yet written that history which could have as its sub-title: ' Portrait of Napoleon.'

H. BUTTERFIELD.

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SATIRE

POEMS OF CHARLES CHURCHILL. Edited by James Laver. Two Vols. (Eyre and Spottiswoode, £3 3s.).

Charles Churchill cannot be claimed either as a major poet or as a major satirist. He has always been considered as a minor 18th century satirist and political pamphleteer, to be remembered in connection with John Wilkes and Junius, but whose works need not necessarily be read. Nor is this opinion likely to change. Nevertheless, in an age which seems to offer unexampled opportunities for a satirist, and which has not yet produced any one of note, it will not be time wasted to remind ourselves of Churchill and the tradition he represents.

Poetry we generally think of as the great creative and unifying force, harmonizing differing elements into a new satisfying whole. Satire is the complement to this type of poetry. Satire is a particular method of expressing antipathy, usually with intent to denigrate the object satirised. The Romantic conception of poetry found no room for experiences born of antipathetical emotions, and consequently satire was placed outside the pale of poetry. *Don Juan* is to some extent an exception to this, but on the other hand it can be claimed as the last representative of the Augustan tradition. At any rate, satire disappears from ' poetry ' after *Peter Bell the Third* ; Dryden and Pope, and the greater part of the 18th century became able versifiers, but not true poets.

Even now we are still influenced by this concept of poetry and tend to overlook the value of satire. ' Emotion acts not unlike such a fluid as the early scientists invented to explain the effect of electricity: it has really one continuous circular movement, but to the subject it appears to have two, parallel and in opposite directions. That is to say, it has a positive and negative pole ; it can be orientated at its extreme in either of two ways: as delight in, or disgust with an object. Romantic poetry is always the expression of one of these extremes, but since reactions are rarely so pure as to be fit to be represented as ecstasy or complete revulsion, a great deal of the poetry based on this convention fails to satisfy modern sophistication. (E. Rickword: *Towards Standards of Criticism,* p. 75). Swift is the complete antithesis

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to the Romantic view: he is the poet of the negative emotions *par excellence*. At his best, it is hard to say what he is satirising, what he is revolting against, as we should be required to do, if we thought of satire in the usual way—' the true end of Satyre is the ammendment of Vices by correction.'

On the other hand the highest type of poetry makes use of both negative and positive experiences, achieving the full and balanced response. Irony, as Dr. Richards has said, is necessary in great poetry . . . ' irony in this sense consists in the bringing in of the opposite, the complementary impulses: that is why poetry which is exposed to it is not of the highest order,' and is comparatively unstable, liable to be overthrown by irrelevant attitudes. (*Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 250). Donne could write a love poem and be satiric, both at the same time ; Pope could combine ' pure poetry ' with satire. Indeed, the correct approach to his satires (cf. *The Poetry of Pope* by F. R. Leavis: *Scrutiny*, December, 1933), is to regard them as poems which happen to be satiric. The literary critic's approach to satire should not differ fundamentally from his approach to other literary works of art. He should not be confused by the *ad hoc* nature of satire, which is apt to mislead the unwary. The satirist, like the poet, is an artist with a need to create ; his materials are the experiences ' engendered by the clash of personality and the hostility of circumstances ' ; his medium, words.

Churchill is hardly a good example for illustrating these remarks, for he is not a great satirist, nor is he a great poet. The greatness of Dryden, and especially Pope, is evident in their subtle complexity ; their flexibility, darting from one aspect of the subject to another ; their fineness of poise, and their detachment from the immediate object of their attack—that detachment which is usually called ' impersonality ' in the case of the poet, and ' tolerance ' in the case of the satirist. Churchill lacks these: his satiric hand is heavy and gains weight by accumulated blows in the same spot. When he does change his attack the transition is violent, so that his poems consist of paragraphs linked only by their common object and their steady unaltered tone, and consequently he appears good in short quotations but dull and tiresome when read at any length. He never approaches to anything like the tight and powerful construction of Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*.

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Churchill has not sufficient detachment for a great satirist: he is primarily a poet of invective, and his best work is of this type. Consider this typical passage from the *Epistle to William Hogarth*:

> Hogarth, stand forth—I dare thee to be tried
> In that great court where conscience must preside ;
> At that most solemn bar hold up thy hand ;
> Think before whom, on what account, you stand—
> Speak, but consider well—from first to last
> Review thy life, weigh every action past ;
> Nay—you shall have no reason to complain—
> Take longer time and view them o'er again . . .

Invective is primarily a particular tone of satire, an attitude to the object of satire, threatening, abusive, and in its weaker moments, querulous, as in the following passage from the poem on *Night*, which will also serve to illustrate Churchill's normal style:

> Then in oblivion's grateful cup I drown
> The galling sneer, the supercilious frown,
> The strange reserve—the proud affected state
> Of upstart knaves grown rich—of fools grown great.
> No more that abject wretch disturbs my rest,
> Who meanly overlooks a friend distressed.
> Purblind to poverty the worldling goes,
> And scarce sees rags an inch before his nose,
> But from a crowd can single out his grace,
> And cringe and creep to fools who strut in lace.

It is to be contrasted with the 'saner' more 'tolerant' satire, where the satirist has had the power of standing back from his experience, of viewing it all round, and of responding 'not through one narrow channel of interest, but simultaneously and coherently through many.' Compared with this, invective is undigested anger and uncontrolled fury.

Invective is, of course, a very powerful weapon constantly being used by the satirist to degrade, discredit and belittle his opponent, but with Dryden, Swift or Pope it is not the only shot in the locker, and gains in power by being renewed for the

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precise moment and by being used in conjunction with, or in contrast to other devices. With Churchill and the minor satirists generally (*e.g.* Junius) it is the dominant attitude, the normal method of attack.

Two other points of interest about Churchill remain. Within his limits he is quite successful: and he knew his limits and stuck to them. His model was Dryden and often in his best moments he approaches Dryden's intense precision of statement, although he lacks something of the latter's verve and fineness of poise. For example:

> I cannot truckle to a fool of state,
> Nor take a favour from the man I hate:
> Free leave have others by such means to shine;
> I scorn their practice; they may laugh at mine.

Passages quite so good as this are not common: but they represent the ideal at which Churchill constantly aimed. Secondly, it is owing to the strong Dryden-Augustan tradition of satiric poetry that Churchill rose to be a poet at all, for in a later age he would never have considered using poetry as his medium and would have achieved only a transitory glory and no lasting effect. Presumably to-day he would have been a mere journalist.

H. J. EDWARDS.

SENSE AND POETRY. Essays on the Place of Meaning in Contemporary Verse, by John Sparrow (Constable, 7/6d.).

It would be unfair to suggest that Mr. Sparrow's book, which is one more attempt to knock the nonsense out of modern poetry, is either useless or unimportant. In spite of the Book Society, it is not even wholly bad. Clarity, occasional gropings towards order, and even a certain kind of intelligence—are all discernible here. 'His book is also,' as a Mr. Walpole warns us at the outset, 'extremely amusing.' The humour is either at the expense of modern writers in general, and of the kind we expect from Sir Reginald Blomfield or the Honourable John Collier when Modern Art is mentioned, or else is directed against a few easily vulnerable

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individuals. There has, of course, been no slowness among our front-line wits in seizing on Mr. Leavis as a butt ; and I think much of his writing lends itself almost irresistibly to humorous exploitation. For to communicate an enthusiasm, especially by attempting to rationalize it, is as I know to my cost the most difficult thing—and the readiest target for sniggerers. So Mr. Sparrow, too, gets lots of quiet fun by trotting out ' the Doctor's ' dicta. His chaff is chaff of a kind that it would not be impertinent to hand back. Hopping brightly hither and thither underneath the High Table of ' Cultured Modernity,' Mr. Sparrow views with evident distaste a few fragments of poetry dropped, for the most part, by the very critics at whose feet he directs his most vicious pecks. But for all his fun, Mr. Sparrow is obviously in deadly earnest, and his quotations from all the standard handbooks on his subject, and from back numbers of all the usual English and French reviews, give an idea of how distressingly thorough he has tried to be. His first hundred pages provide a not uninteresting commentary on some of the problems surrounding ' meaning ' and ' communication.' The number of authorities invoked gives these five essays a somewhat derivative air, but Mr. Sparrow preserves his independence throughout and easily settles the hash of upstarts like Empson in a peremptory footnote. In his final essay, entitled ' Specimens,' we have a fifty page report, the author's considered opinion of modern poetry as represented by Cummings' ' Sunset ' ; Pound ; Auntie Edith (who wins the bay leaf) ; an early imagist indiscretion by Aldington ; Read, Eliot, Auden, and—for some reason that is not apparent—the prose of James Joyce. In neither *Mauberley*, nor *The Waste Land*, nor *The Orators*, can Mr. Sparrow detect any quality that might in some degree justify the extravagance of the admiration that has been lavished on them, although he dissects all three with a minuteness that is astonishing when you consider that his only instrument was the blunt butterknife of common sense.

It is possible to have considerable sympathy for some of the intentions which in these essays Mr. Sparrow professes ; and even for many of his more general observations about literature. Unfortunately the latter do not appear to spring from any very profound source, or to be applied to particulars with any very nice discrimination. Since he reveals over and over again such

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a pathetic insensitiveness to the peculiar qualities of fine imagery and fine verse, we are not surprised to find it is in the name of the Intelligence that Mr. Sparrow bends his bow ; yet it is precisely the most intelligent poetry that is exposed to his unkindest shafts. The poem by Mr. Read which appears on page 140 and the quotation further on from *Triumphal March* are two examples of poetry which errs, if at all, on the intellectual side ; and if Mr. Sparrow had brought his intelligence to bear on them he might have understood them a little better than to speak of them as ' cultivated nonsense.' Not that understanding would have helped him to appreciate such poetry. Also, that appreciation may sometimes precede understanding is something that Mr. Sparrow neither appreciates nor understands, so that on page 128 it is only natural that he should question Pound's and Eliot's ability to enjoy and use verse written in languages other than English. (We have heard before about their bad Greek accents. As for Provençal and Chinese, if Pound knew no more of the latter than I do, and no more of the former than *Ara vos prec . . . sovegna vos,* he would be in a better way to expound their respective literatures than Mr. Sparrow is to expound modern English poetry).

Sense and Poetry fails to be valuable because of, rather than in spite of, the success with which it fulfills its purpose. Mr. Sparrow's arguments and judgments are almost all based on mistaken assumptions as to what modern poetry, and modern poets, set out to do. (The mistakes are not all Mr. Sparrow's: in his introduction (p. 10, 11, 12) he has taken too literally the dogmas of others but on his last page he says: ' If Mr. Auden had not felt it his duty to be " modern " . . . ' etc.). In any case a writer's professed intentions, which may have little or nothing to do with the merits or demerits of his work, are often totally at variance with the actual animating impulse, which lies deeper—deeper, perhaps, than Mr. Sparrow's limited insight would permit him to inquire. And with regard to Mr. Sparrow himself, we cannot resist the suspicion that his book was not written primarily as a piece of disinterested research into the problems he touches, but proceeded from an impulse—unconscious, perhaps—to defend himself against the invasion of what is too new and lively for his taste ; to buttress comfortable prejudice, in fact, with a few specious justifications. This suspicion is not dissipated by the approval

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which he extends, passim, to several critics (*e.g.*, Mr. Desmond MacCarthy, Mr. F. L. Lucas, Mr. Megroz, and Mr. Max Eastman) whose motives, though by no means identical, are not obscured by the same veil of detachment.

To give him his due, many of the charges Mr. Sparrow brings against 'cultured modernity' are perfectly just; and his comparative history of obscurity is very entertaining. But it is all a little late in the day. We knew most of these things before—partly because we have been told so often. And in the two years that have elapsed since most of these essays were written, poetry—even Mr. Eliot's, even Mr. Auden's—has taken a direction away from the obscurity which necessarily shrouded its beginnings. Besides, with all its scholarly show, Mr. Sparrow's is only, like the Riding-Graves *Survey*, an elementary textbook: hardly matter for *Scrutiny*. But I have hinted that it may have a use and an importance. A glance back at the dustwrapper reminds us of those to whom it will be found very useful indeed— as a magazine of intellectual high explosive against the onslaught of the hated 'highbrow.' If Mr. Walpole's latest straw should encourage someone to stack together an anthology of similar statements (Mrs. Leavis has already collected a nucleus) the Minority Press might launch a best-seller. That would justify the claim to importance of *Sense and Poetry*.

HUGH GORDON PORTEUS.

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION, by R. D. Charques (Secker, 6/-).

Mr. Charques' thesis, developed with much iteration, is that modern literature is losing all its vitality by refusing to notice the class-struggle. He gives us a somewhat simplified diagnosis of the contemporary situation, to persuade us that revolution, sooner or later, is inevitable. Chapters on poetry, the novel and the drama point out that contemporary authors are too absorbed in self-expression, and in perfecting their art, to recognize this. The conclusion states that all hope of peaceful revolution must vanish, if the workers are not given revolutionary literature—'If imaginative literature can do no more than continue to feed the

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worker's belly with the east wind, it is not improbable that revolution here will take the course it has taken in the past elsewhere. If revolution cannot have its literature so much the worse for society.' Mr. Charques omits to state in what way a literature dealing openly with the class-struggle—in short, revolutionary propaganda—is calculated to lessen the violence of a social revolution.

This change from self-expression, to the expression of a social consciousness—Mr. Charques makes a very sharp distinction between these—may impair the artistic merit of contemporary literature, but the contents will give it renewed vitality. This brings us to his conception of art. It is something in no way connected with life, apparently, and which can be perfected by an author, completely oblivious to his age. It annoys Mr. Charques who tells us that ' pure literature is made up of the familiar impurities of cultural decadence.' The ordinary reader would imagine that, here, he is attacking the art-for-art's-sakers and descendants of Oscar Wilde. But no: Mr. Eliot, Mrs. Woolf, Mr. Forster are all purveyors of ' pure literature,' for never do they venture outside the limits of ' middle-class culture ' and bourgeois society.

In short, Mr. Charques is quite incapable of seeing any genuine ' social consciousness ' in a work—for him the term is synonymous with a description of the life and hardships of the working-class. There is no attempt to understand *The Waste Land* for instance, although its dissatisfaction with the contemporary situation is noted. But, like all modern poetry, it ' is " class " poetry in the sense that it is addressed to a privileged and particularly cultivated section of society—a section specially engaged in literary pursuits or interests.' There is no question of endeavouring to help others to appreciate poetry—poetry must come down to the level of others. ' The poet whose soul is too sensitive for traffic with ordinary humanity should consider shutting up shop '—this, *à propos* of the finding that ' terror of vulgarity ' is the mainspring of Mr. Eliot's poetry.

And, for a revolutionary, Mr. Charques' methods of judgment are curiously conservative. This criticism of *The Testament of Beauty* (towards which he is oddly respectful) is that ' It brought with it little of the stir, the excitement, the heightened feeling, the colour and glow of poetry ' ; and, later, ' the modernist poet's

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emphasis on intellect, on hard thinking, on erudition or abstract patterns is a confession of failure of impulse.' Presumably, there will be no hard thinking in revolutionary poetry ; for Mr. Charques, emotion is poetry, thought is not.

Literature, then, is, on the whole, a luxury, and is useful to society only when sound social tenets can be extracted from it. It can be of no practical use apart from its subject-matter, and if the (undoubted) lack of vitality in contemporary literature is to be remedied, it must be by a change in subject-matter. The over-mastering desire for self-expression must vanish, and the voice of society take its place. The author must prove his practical utility, in the simplest possible terms—dead authors too, presumably, for we are told in the chapter on the drama that ' The Elizabethans or the Restoration dramatists . . . pall quickly, and make only the lightest contact with the present age.'

These are Mr. Charques' views ; I do not know whether they are to be taken as the official Marxist views. If so, a society educated on these principles—if they are to be educated, for there is little reference to this—will be no better equipped against humbug and imposition than is the present newspaper-reading public.

The book would have been more convincing if the author had had an ability to discriminate between genuine and sham, the living and the dead, in literature.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

WILLIAM BLAKE, by J. Middleton Murry (Cape, 7/6d.).

This book is an attempt to extract a coherent philosophy from Blake's writings ; and to show how this extract can be stimulating and beneficial to anyone seeking to appraise and to cope with the contemporary situation.

Here is a passage which seems to me typical of Mr. Murry's method. He has been discussing the difference of tone and feeling in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *The Four Zoas*. In the *Marriage* Blake, he says, is self-confident (' I cared not for consequences but for work '). But in *The Four Zoas* he ' had a new

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problem to solve: the resistance of the human mind to the luminous and self-evident truth: he had a new obstacle to evercome: his own anger and dismay and resentment at the resistance it encountered.'

'It is manifest,' he continues, 'that such an explanation can explain nothing to the mind which is itself opaque to the truth we have called luminous and self-evident. Unless the simple verity of the Divine Vision is admitted, such an explanation can be at best the displacement of one obscurity by another.'

I have made an honest effort to understand him: but Mr. Murry's 'explanation,' for me, is precisely this. The crux of the whole matter seems to me his attitude to mysticism.

'The motives of the mystical mind,' he says, 'may seem very arbitrary to the man without mystical experience.' Indeed he makes them seem so. But the point is, that as far as art is concerned, they are irrelevant. 'Mystical' experience is no more 'arbitrary' than any other kind of experience. What the critic has to decide is whether it is valuable, and whether it is successfully communicated; whether the expression of it 'contains within itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise.'

Mr. Murry's language is often loosely emotive. Here is his account of the mystical experience. 'Through the medium of Imagination, in the momentary perfection we impersonally enter, we behold the perfection of all things and are one with that perfection.'

And here is his muscularly Christian comment on

> 'But most through midnight streets I hear
> How the youthful Harlot's curse
> Blasts the new born Infant's tear,
> And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.'

'There is no such realist as a great mystic, for only the mystic can look upon things as they really are. Whence came the Harlot? asked Blake. And he answered the question like a man indeed.'

It is no doubt tempting to think that the obscurest parts of Blake's work contain mysterious wisdom: but this is only romantic esotericism. What is valuable in him is available to the common reader in the same way and to the same extent as the work of other poets is.

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One doesn't wish to appear barbarously or crudely sceptical, but one feels, in reading this book (with all due respect to Mr. Murry's earnest wish to leave the world better than he found it) that it is not much good, at this late date, to talk at great length about the Divine Vision. (The capitals are Mr. Murry's). If one compares this book with, for example, the analysis in *The Problem of Style* of Cleopatra's death scene, one cannot help feeling that for Mr. Murry to desert criticism of this type for windy pseudo-religious ' interpretation ' is a great loss to literature.

Authors of books on Blake should take as their text Matthew Arnold's dictum, that ' Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion ': a ' proposition ' which, he hopes, ' we shall one day learn to make general.'

T. R. BARNES.

UNEMPLOYMENT, by Eric Gill (Faber, 1/-).

The value of this elegantly printed booklet lies in a paragraph on the concluding page:

> ' These necessary works (food, clothing, shelter and entertainment) have hitherto been man's chief means to the very thing which he is now expected to gain without doing them, namely culture—the knowledge and love of " Higher Things." Hitherto the vast majority of men have gained such culture as they have gained . . . by cultivating the arts of agriculture and gardening ; cooking and making drinks ; weaving and spinning and dressmaking ; pottery, metal working, and wood working ; building in all its multitude of branches (from chicken coops to cathedrals) ; and every kind of dance and song and music and poetry. Henceforth these are not to be man's means to culture. He is to gain culture in his spare time, not by practice of these multifarious and necessary arts, because being necessary they will all be done or supplied by machines.'

A problem which being crucial does not receive overmuch attention. Of the preceding pages it may be said that if clerics and politicians were in possession of the simple account contained therein one would have more respect for churches and parties.

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ELIZABETHAN PROSE

ELIZABETHAN PROSE, Selected and Prefaced by Michael Roberts (Cape, 6/-).

Mr. Roberts' useful anthology should do more than remind the general reader that Elizabethan Prose is not confined to a few patches of fine writing. A careful reading of his extracts from journalists alone is sufficient to increase our understanding of Elizabethan verse and to suggest an important approach to the culture of the period.

We can learn a good deal merely by comparing a few sentences by an Elizabethan and by a modern journalist. The first of the following extracts is from *The Unfortunate Traveller,* the second, from *The World Crisis.*

> So it fel out, that it being a vehement hot summer when I was a sojourner there, there entered such a hotspurd plague as hath not bin heard of: why it was but a word and a blowe, Lord have mercie upon us and he was gone. Within three quarters of a yeere in that one citie there died of it a hundred thousand looke in Lanquets chronicle and you shall finde it. To smell of a nosegay that was poisond, and turne your nose to a house that had the plague, it was all one. The clouds like a number of cormorants that keepe their corne til it stinke and is mustie, kept in their stinking exhalations till they had almost stifeled all Romes inhabitants.

> When the great organizations of this world are strained beyond breaking point, their structure often collapses at all points simultaneously. There is nothing on which policy, however wise, can build ; no foothold can be found for virtue or valour, no authority or impetus for a rescuing genius. The mighty framework of German Imperial Power, which a few days before had overshadowed the nations, shivered suddenly into a thousand individually disintegrating fragments. All her Allies whom she had so long sustained, fell down broken and ruined, begging separately for peace. The faithful armies were beaten at the front and demoralized from the rear. The proud efficient Navy

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mutinied. Revolution exploded in the most disciplined of States. The Supreme War Lord fled.

Such a spectacle appals mankind ; and a knell rang in the ear of the victors, even in their hour of triumph.

I shall speak later of the characteristics of Nashe's prose. Here it is sufficient to remark that if his comparison of the clouds to contemporary capitalists is too highly charged with vitality (for it has a life of its own independent of the rest of the sentence) Mr. Churchill's metaphors are ghosts. Throughout the second extract the relation of word to thing is so tenuous that the reader is baffled whenever he attempts to find more than the minimum of content in any of the glib phrases: in such a diluted style it is fitting that a ' framework ' should ' overshadow the nations ' in pretended solidity. The passage is in fact fraudulent, claiming a response which it does nothing to justify. I do not of course suppose that Nashe and Mr. Churchill are trying to do the same kind of thing, but they are both engaged in exploiting their medium for a particular end, and Nashe is the more conscious of what he is doing and his method is the more honest. Now the point that the difference is something more than a personal difference between two writers seems best enforceable by saying that if a book were to be written on the kinds of verbal exploitation that have been possible in different periods it would have to begin by considering the relation of the written and the spoken word. Except on a political platform none of Mr. Churchill's sentences could be spoken. The paragraph from Nashe, like the bulk of Elizabethan prose, is based on living idiomatic speech.

This is probably one of the most important clues to a proper understanding of Elizabethan literature ; but, unqualified, the same remark might be applied to the prose of very different writers in a different age—to the following passage from Dryden's Preface to *All for Love,* for example:

> Dionysius and Nero had the same longings, but with all their power they could never bring the business well about. 'Tis true, they proclaimed themselves poets by sound of trumpet ; and poets they were, upon pain of death to any man who durst call them otherwise. The audience had a fine time on't, you may imagine ; they sat in bodily fear, and looked as demurely as

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> they could: for it was a hanging matter to laugh unseasonably ; and the tyrants were suspicious, as they had reason, that their subjects had 'em in the wind ; so, every man, in his own defence, set as good a face upon the business as he could. 'Twas known beforehand that the monarchs were to be crowned laureates ; but when the show was over, and an honest man was suffered to depart quietly, he took out his laughter which he had stifled, with a firm resolution never more to see an Emperor's play, though he had been ten years a-making it.

The most striking difference between this and anything by Nashe, Marprelate or Gosson is, I suppose, one of tone and manner. Dryden's words contain an implicit assurance that the reader will not be asked to respond in certain ways ; there will be no attack on the heart or liver. But it is not merely that the audience, and therefore literary manners, had changed. The staple of Dryden's prose is a language more select and refined, more Polite, than that of the Elizabethans. Elizabethan prose—since the argument requires the obvious—is closer to folk speech, to the English of ploughing, carting, selling and small town gossip. And if it was possible to say many things in Augustan prose which could not be said in the prose of Nashe, Nashe and his contemporaries had a source of strength denied to the Augustans: ' Here is your husband ; like a mildewed ear, Blasting his wholesome brother.' ' Money is like muck, not good except it be spread.' Bunyan alone of Dryden's contemporaries had such resources: ' Thou talkest like one on whose head is the shell to this very day.'—A low phrase, Dr. Johnson would say, debased by vulgar mouths.

It is only too easy, when discussing the vigour of Elizabethan prose, to divagate into sociological generalizations. But the mind of an age is best studied in its literature—Elizabethan prose reflects a way of living not merely because there are prose accounts of Elizabethan habits—and the social background can only be profitably discussed when a start has been made from criticism. The few simple facts about ' conditions ' that are necessary to give the right perspective may be conveniently stated here.

Elizabethan England consisted mainly of agricultural communities, each with a vigorous local life and tradition ; and the town dweller shared most of the mental habits of the countryman.

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London was obviously exceptional, but in many ways its ethos was that of the market town. It was still comparatively small, and its inhabitants were familiar with the processes necessary for growing, making and selling most of its commodities. It had a genuine community of interests, reflected even in a common stock of objects of derision: a reference to a local eccentric (' He that is knowne by wearing a cloake of tuftaffatie eighteene yeare,' for example) was expected to be immediately recognizable. And its gossip was that of the small town: familiar jests, proverbial sayings (' Farewell Bowe, have over the Bridge, where I heard say honest Conscience was once drownd '), accounts of traditional wonders and stories of familiar places. Popular interests are reflected clearly enough in the titles of plays and pamphlets: ' The Famous Chronicle of king Edwarde the first sirnamed Edwarde Longshankes . . . Lastly, the sinking of Queene Elinor, who sunck at Charingcrosse, and rose again at Potters-hith now named Queenhith.' ' The Second Part of, If you know not me, you know no bodie. With the building of the Royall Exchange: And the famous Victorie of Queene Elizabeth, in the Yeare 1588.' The popularity of Dekker's pamphlets, *The Dead Term* and *The Wonderful Year* for example, was largely due to the way in which he exploited this kind of interest:

> Such was the fashion of this Land, when the great Land-Lady thereof left it: Shee came in with the fall of the leafe, and went away in the Spring: her life (which was dedicated to Virginitie), both beginning & closing up a miraculous Mayden circle: for she was borne upon a Lady Eve, and died upon a Lady Eve: her Nativitie & death being memorable by this wonder: the first and last yeares of her Raigne by this, that a *Lee* was Lorde Maior when she came to the Crowne, and a *Lee* Lorde Maior when she departed from it. Three places are made famous by her for three things, *Greenewich* for her birth, *Richmount* for her death, *White-Hall* for her Funerall.

Gossip of this kind has obvious affinities with Malinowski's ' phatic communion.' Its nearest modern equivalent is the desultory talk of the bar-parlour in the more remote villages.

The point that I wish to make is that, in a certain sense, Elizabethan society was ' primitive ' (No one need suppose that I

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am comparing the Elizabethans to Trobriand Islanders), and its language retained many more of the primitive functions of speech than are to be found after the 17th century. Not only was the relation of word and thing, of word and action, far more intimate than in a society that obtains most of its more permanent impressions from books and newspapers, a large number of Elizabethan words and phrases are the direct equivalent of action—gestures of sociability, contempt or offence (the Elizabethans had a particularly rich vocabulary of abuse). Moreover, the muscular content of Elizabethan English is an important part of its ' meaning,' and it was this, together with the reading habits fostered by speaking such a language, that enabled physical states to be portrayed with such immediacy:

> O so I was tickled in the spleene with that word, my hart hopt and danst, my elbowes icht, my fingers friskt, I wist not what should become of my feete, nor knewe what I did for joy.

Poets, as well as prose writers, could rely on their readers to do more than attach a bare referential meaning to each word. ' When Shakespeare describes a thing,' said Dryden, ' you more than see it, you feel it too.' And it was not only *things* that could be evoked in concrete immediacy.

> What shalt thou expect,
> To be depender on a thing that leans?
> Who cannot be new built, nor has no friends
> So much as but to prop him.

One has only to attempt to read these lines with the eye alone to realize what is meant by ' the body and movement of the language.'

The social and linguistic factors referred to are sufficient to account for the strength and the limitations of Elizabethan prose. Judging by achievement we may say that it is an admirable medium for vivid and fanciful description and narrative, but not for exact description ; for folk humour, not for wit ; for satire and invective (often more violent than the occasion demands—' Pappe with an Hatchet '), not for analysis or logical argument. Its virtue is vigour not perspicuity. It misses effects depending upon tone, subtlety, and an exact control of tempo and movement. Its

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significant limitations are particularly noticeable in two fields, those of argument and literary criticism. I shall return to the question of dialectic. As for the second point, a careful reading of Gregory Smith's two volumes can only confirm the opinion that, if the chief function of criticism is clarification, there is no Elizabethan criticism worth the name. Nor was it possible to use Elizabethan prose in the lucid explication of a mature attitude. A comparison of Florio with Montaigne does more than make this clear ; the habits of the language may be seen merely by putting a few sentences of the original and the translation side by side.

> On a raison de descrier l'hipocrisie qui se trouve en la guerre : car qu'est il plus aisé à un homme practic que de gauchir aux dangers et *de contrefaire le mauvais, ayant le cœur plein de mollesse*?
>
> There is great reason the hypocrisie that is found in war should be discovered: For, what is more easie in a man of practise, then to flinch in dangers and *to counterfeit a gallant and a boaster when his heart is full of faintnesse, and ready to droope for feare?*
>
> Il faut trier de toute une nation une douzaine d'hommes pour juger d'un arpent de terre ; et le jugement de nos inclinations et de nos actions, la plus difficile matiere et la plus importante qui soit, nous la remettons *à la voix de la commune et de la tourbe,* mere d'ignorance d'injustice et d'inconstance.
>
> We are often driven to empanell and select a jury of twelve men out of a whole countrie to determine of an acre of land: And the judgement of our inclinations and actions (the waightiest and hardest matter that is) we referre it *to the idle breath of the vaine voice of the common sort and base raskalitie,* which is the mother of ignorance, of injustice, and inconstancie.
>
> Peu de gens ont espousé *des amies qui ne s'en soyent repentis.*
>
> Few men have wedded *their sweet hearts, their paramours or mistresses, but have come home by weeping Crosse, and ere long repented their bargaine.*

If the English is more diffuse than the French this is not because Florio was a bad translator ; the diffuseness was essential in an attempt to convey the full meaning of the original. It is not

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merely that there was frequently no exact verbal equivalence between the two languages (' Those which are called honest, vertuous and sufficient ' is the nearest that Florio can get to ' ceux qu'on appelle honnestes et habiles hommes ') ; the *tone* of the second passage allows Montaigne's short phrase to convey all that is contained in Florio's expanded description. In the third example not only is the English version longer than the French, the folk idiom (' weeping Crosse ') and the use of the word ' bargaine ' (with its associations drawn from the popular Woman Controversy—' filthy bargain,' etc.) completely transforms the sentence. It is no longer a detached *observation* but a misogynist commonplace of the tavern, with an emotional fringe entirely lacking in the French. The two sentences require an entirely different kind of acceptance from the reader. Further comparison is impossible here, but the extracts are typical. Florio's difficulties (his unusually heavy stopping seems to be an attempt to reproduce the logical ordonnance of the French) are due to the fact that the language which he had to use did not allow precisely those qualities which distinguish the prose of Montaigne—lucidity, compactness, flexibility and submission to control.[1]

To say this is to explain why, although there are scores of written works whose object is, ostensibly, to explain or to persuade, there is no Elizabethan prose which is *intellectually* persuasive. Hooker's prose is admirable, but it is not, strictly speaking, an intellectual prose. He is at his best not when he is arguing a case, but when he is expressing a conviction emotionally held, as in the following passage (where the effect depends entirely upon the rhythm and the metaphors), he is expressing his feelings about order:

> Now if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether though it were but for a while the observation of her own laws ; if those principal and mother elements of the world,

[1]This is not to say that some of these qualities are not sometimes found separately in Elizabethan prose ; the superiority of Montaigne's prose lies in the combination. Bacon's prose is compact (' His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss ') but no one could call it flexible ; his sentences lie stiffly side by side like logs.

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whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have ; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself ; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen ; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should as it were through a languishing faintness begin to stand and to rest himself ; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yield them relief: what would become of man himself, whom these things do now serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world ?[1]

In Elizabethan sermons the method of the public disputation is the usual one adopted: opposition points are put up and knocked down in order ; there are appeals to authority and custom ; there is a large amount of verbal quibbling ;[2] there is rarely an attempt to deploy a consistent argument. Much the same might be said of the early economic tracts, to take another example. Clearly the deficiency cannot be explained *merely* by a reference to vocabulary and idiom: many other factors must be taken into

[1]Contrast the use of metaphor in, say, the *Leviathan* (1651). For example: ' All men are by nature provided of notable multiplying glasses (that is their Passions and Selfe-love), through which, every little payment appeareth a great grievance ; but are destitute of those prospective glasses (namely Morall and Civil Science), to see a farre off the miseries that hang over them, and cannot without such payments be avoyded.'

[2]' Even the works of God are not equally excellent ; this [the making of woman] is but *faciam*, it is not *faciamus* ; in the creation of man, there is intimated a Consultation, a Deliberation of the whole *Trinity* ; in the making of *woman*, it is not expressed so ; it is but *faciam*.' John Donne, *Fifty Sermons* (1649), Sermon II. The remark is repeated and expanded later.

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account, such as, in the examples cited, the Elizabethan fondness for rhetoric on the one hand, and the absence of the ' scientific spirit ' and the lack of adequate information on the other. But if factors such as these helped to shape the language, they were themselves, in part, determined by it.[1] Anyone who has looked at Gresham's letters on the foreign exchange or blown the dust off the volumes of the Parker Society will understand what is meant by saying that the strictly intellectual elucidation of a proposition was impossible, that there were limitations inherent in the language.

The controversial pamphlets were not called in evidence in the last section for obvious reasons ; they often contain a show of formal logic, but it is the merest bluff, hardly meant to deceive. But there is no need to point out their importance, and a very brief account of some characteristics of the pamphleteering method will help to correct the emphasis placed on the limitations of Elizabethan prose.

In popular controversy, such as that of Nashe or Marprelate, one of the more obvious devices is to start with a crude or simple feeling, cast about for the first suitable metaphor, and then to let the metaphor develop of its own momentum in the general direction indicated by the feeling:

> They call the Bishops butchers, I like the Metaphore wel, such calves must be knockt on the head, and who fitter than the Fathers of the Church, to cut the throates of heresies in the Church. Nay, when they have no propertie of sheepe but baa, their fleece for flockes, not cloath, their rotten flesh for no dish, but ditches ; I thinke them woorth neither the tarring nor the telling, but for their scabbednes to be thrust from the pinfolde to the scaffold, and with an *Habeas Corpus* to remoove them from the Shepheards tarreboxe, to the hangmans budget.

The argument is conducted by invective and ridicule, by parable and metaphor, by alliteration and puns: ' I but he hath sillo-

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[1] In any society habits and language form a complex interacting whole, of which the parts cannot be studied in artificial isolation. This is admirably brought out by Malinowski in *The Sexual Life of Savages* and in his Supplementary Essay in *The Meaning of Meaning*.

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gismes in pike sauce, and arguments that have been these twentie yeres in pickle. I, picke hell, you shall not find such reasons.' Often, as here, an interlocutor is imagined as present, and there are pages which can only be understood if we realize that certain sentences—there is no typographical distinction—come from the opposition side. The pamphleteering method is, in short, the method of spoken dialectic. Popular writing is largely, like verbal fencing, an exhibition of skill, and the writer, like an improvisator on the stage, takes care to call attention to a particular display of agility: ' Now comes a biting speech, let mee stroake my beard thrice like a German, before I speak a wise word.' ' O sweetlie brought in, at least three figures in that line, besides the wit on't.'

For a proper appreciation of Elizabethan prose, as the pamphlets make plain, we need to understand both the close relation of the written to the spoken word (words had not—to adapt a remark of Mr. Empson's—a mere newspaper meaning, intended to be mechanically snapped up by the eye), and the Elizabethan love of verbal ingenuity. It is the latter which accounts for the vogue of Euphuism, for the popularity of sermons and the pervasive interest in rhetoric, and which explains the bulk of Elizabethan journalism. There is a book to be written on the significance of Thomas Nashe, who besides being the best was a typical journalist. Almost all his work shows the same characteristics. The ostensible theme is merely an occasion for the performance. There are the usual puns and witty metaphors ; there are moralizing asides, pieces of incidental satire and ' pretty parentheses ' on matters of topical interest ; there is a good deal of miscellaneous information (the Elizabethans seem to have been particularly interested in popular etymology), and there are rhetorical declamations on set themes—such as the speech on travel by the English Earl and Cutwolfe's ' insulting oration ' in *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Like the rest Nashe acts as showman to his own abilities: ' Prepare your eares and your teares, for never tyll this thrust I anie tragicall matter upon you.' ' To shewe how I can raile, thus would I begin to raile at him.' His attitude is indicated by the light-hearted abruptness with which he finishes an act as soon as he is tired of it: ' Whippet, turne to a new lesson, and strike wee up John for the King.' The Praise of the Red Herring makes the intention explicit: ' I may *Cum gratia et priveligio* pronounce

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it, that a red herring is wholesome in a frosty morning, and rake up some few scattered sillables together in the exornation and pollishing of it. '

Nashe exploited his medium in order to obtain a particular effect. But the important point is that he knew what he was doing, and his readers knew what they were getting for their money ; there were no pseudo-profundities. It was, indeed, impossible that there should be. Neither the end of *Tono Bungay* (' We make and pass, we are all things that make and pass . . . '), nor Rupert Brooke's reflections on England (*Oxford Book of English Prose,* No. 599), nor the paragraph from Mr. Winston Churchill quoted at the beginning of this essay could have been written in Elizabethan English. To understand exactly why this is so is to understand the development of the language between the 16th and the 20th centuries, and a great deal besides ; it is to understand the Progress of Civilization. In the first place it is obvious that Elizabethan prose postulates a different audience from any of the modern audiences, with different attitudes and expectations and a different readiness to respond. At its lowest (ignoring for the moment its positive achievements) it had an important negative virtue. With its puns, metaphors and various forms of word play, with its constant references to matters away from the main topic, using words rich in muscular content, read in much the same way as they were spoken, and a system of punctuation not devised for the greatest ease of the greatest number, it demanded continuous activity on the part of the reader. Readers of ' lower grade ' works were not, as now, conditioned into a state in which it was impossible for them to appreciate the highest contemporary achievement. In the second place, Elizabethan prose derives its virtue from a way of living, largely traditional, in which there was a satisfaction, equilibrium and certainty now destroyed ; from, in short, the organic community. The popular art forms of such a society do not depend for their effect on the possibilities of substitute living (it is only modern critics who object to the ending of *All's Well*). Similarly, its language, which by its body and richness allows the poet to call ' the whole soul of man into activity ' (' Soul ' includes the nerves and the blood ; we remember the 17th century ' dissociation of sensibility '), cannot be used for exploiting shallow emotional responses, or for

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manipulating the semblance of ideas in a way that looks like ' thought.' Those Elizabethans who never got beyond Deloney, even those who remembered nothing of *King Lear* beyond the action and a couple of bawdy jokes, were not doomed to pass their lives in the emotional and intellectual muddledom of the readers of the *Daily Mail*.

I have said that Elizabethan prose was neither subtle nor intellectual ; for subtlety we have to go to the later Elizabethan dramatists and the early Metaphysical poets. The remark could be illustrated in detail, but a reference to Donne should be sufficient. In Donne's best verse there is not only a finer emotional discrimination than in his sermons, there is an intellectual quality not found in his prose. To decide exactly why this is so would be an interesting problem. It would involve a consideration of the relation of ' thought ' to ' feeling,' and of the general relation of poetry and prose. It would help to explain some of the later developments of the novel—the work of D. H. Lawrence as well as of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, about whose relation to Nashe some rather loose remarks have recently been made. There is all the difference in the world between Joyce's deliberate manipulations of the language and Nashe's spontaneous effusions, written, he explains ' in my post-haste want of argent, as fast as my hand can trot.'

L. C. KNIGHTS.

NOTE.

Reviews of Economics and Poetry have unavoidably to be held over till the June number.

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